



## **Friday and Friends: A Journey with Else Holmelund Minarik's Little Bear Stories for the Young Child**

Curriculum Unit 04.02.07

by Geraldine Martin

### **Introduction**

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Welcome to the imaginary world of Little Bear! Else Holmelund Minarik's Little Bear stories carry the young child into a realm of fantasy and imagination where characters struggle with many of the same tugging issues that little ones face today. What child doesn't struggle with making friends, or keeping them for that matter? Time and time again as a teacher I hear the rising anxiety in a young child's voice resonate in my classroom: "Kelly said that she will not be my friend anymore." Or perhaps a little more demeaning: "He called me stupid, and he's supposed to be my friend." As adults we sometimes forget how hard and stressful it was being a young child and taking a risk, or claiming our independence. Facing decisions like wanting to find the perfect gift for mom's birthday could be a monumental chore. Minarik's imaginary Mother Bear and Father Bear characters are always close at hand to bring warmth and affection to Little Bear who has to face challenges not unlike those encountered by many children today. Children can identify with Grandfather Bear and Grandmother Bear, especially those who are close to grandparents or are being reared by them.

One of my main goals as a teacher is to foster a love for reading in my children. It is my philosophy that if children are allowed to read what interests them or enjoy what they are reading, they are more apt to become lifelong readers. But how can this be instilled into their young hearts when many of our enrichment books are too difficult for them to read? Many of the books that line a child's shelf at home or perhaps are found in a classroom library contain vocabulary that is too difficult for young children to read orally let alone read for meaning. They may enjoy looking at the pictures briefly but soon lose interest and put the books back on the shelf. Minarik's books contain words that do not discourage kids from reading. The books can easily be used as an extension to one's classroom reading curriculum. The stories are brief yet entertaining, and the illustrations are detailed and engaging.

With these thoughts in mind, I would like to present a unit where strategies are used with puppetry for presenting the art of story telling, via Minarik's Little Bear stories. Foremost and utmost, the unit will be designed to enhance the reading curriculum in the classroom. The children will also discuss the dilemmas that Little Bear and his friends face in the story. They will contrast them to situations that they face in their own lives. They will be encouraged to brainstorm and come up with suggestions for enhancing their own social skills in the classroom and with their extended family. The unit, whose primary emphasis is literature, will also

integrate various art forms such as writing, drawing, song, drama, and crafts.

I have a slight bias towards stories where animals do the talking. I think that children's imaginations are much more stimulated when they can read about an imaginary animal or when they write using animals as characters in their stories. It is as though the characters become less threatening and children can recognize themselves as, and identify more easily with animals. Perhaps they relate with them as peers much as they do a puppet and their perceptions and feelings of acceptance are less threatening. Again, I feel that this sentiment carries over into the children's writing. I have found that in my first grade classes children love to write about animals -- especially imaginary animals which become somewhat a peer and follow along in the child's play and excursions.

Why would I choose Minarik's Little Bear stories as a basis for my unit of study? I teach first grade in a self-contained classroom with varying abilities in the six-to eight-year old age range. In my classroom, approximately two-thirds of my children are reading below grade level. Along with a need for improved reading vocabulary, many of the children exhibit poor self-images, and lack language skills for self-expression. Many have a myriad of social-emotional problems that cloud their perceptions and hinder them from forming meaningful relationships. Little Bear is presented as a sweet child to his mother and father. He is a good friend to his peers, Duck, Hen, and Cat. In other words, he is a good role model for meaningful discussion in improving social skills that involve emotional elements.

More specifically, my unit will include activities suitable for children in kindergarten through third grades. This unit will most probably be used in the first grade curriculum during the winter months when most children are expected to have developed a substantial reading vocabulary. In addition to the arts, the unit will integrate other curriculum areas such as math, science, and social studies. The unit will help to align the curriculum across the three first grade classrooms in our building.

## Objectives

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My overall objectives for the course of my curriculum unit are:

**(1)** To provide an interactive experience through the use of puppetry and the little bear stories by Else Holmelund Minarik:

- a. as individuals
- b. in small reading groups of two or four
- c. in whole group instruction

**(2)** To provide a classroom environment whereby children will receive stimulating intellectual and cognitive development.

- a. with creative puppetry
- b. through published works and illustrations
- c. by a drama production

**(3)** To improve auditory reading and listening skills of participants through:

- a. written works of Else Holmelund Minarik
- b. spoken language

**(4)** To encourage confidence and a positive self-image while participating in class activities:

- a. as listeners
- b. as narrators
- c. as actors
- d. as members of an audience

**(5)** To connect the unit with our school's Comprehensive School Plan and the overall district's standards for curriculum:

- a. reading and language arts
- b. the arts -- theater, music, art
- c. science and social studies
- d. socialization skills

## Examples of Strategies

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How will the art of puppetry tie into a unit using Else Holmelund Minarik's Little Bear stories for teaching reading and the language arts? The art of ventriloquism has been in my teaching repertoire for almost thirty years. As a result, a family of characters with unique personalities, interesting voice variations, and a flair for bright colorful appearances has evolved over the years. Along with my family of characters, several classroom puppets have developed bringing their own magical charms into the first grade curriculum through the art of storytelling. For example, there is Willie Sunday, a favorite in the classroom who keeps the children spellbound by his expertise in phonics, or lack of it, as he misses letters and letter sounds to the squeals and delight of the children. Blue Monday cannot be missed with his indigo face and hot pink hair. Then there is Tuesday's Cup of Sugar who just can't help herself and sticks her tongue out at the children during our lessons. Of course, she feels very sorry and apologizes, saying that she will listen and act just as proper as the children sitting at their desks. These puppets along with Alphabet Thursday, a bright red furry character whose voice is very guttural, assist in introducing our writing assignments along with the integration of social studies and science. Wednesday Delight cannot be missed as she brings new poems for classroom discussion and reading on a weekly basis.

Who will help to coordinate our family of friendly puppets? Mr. Friday is a duck that resides in a brown drawstring bag. The children are soon caught up in the magical illusion surrounding Mr. Friday as he begins to bemoan the fact that his voice is a bit "scratchy," and that he really cannot pronounce all of his words correctly while perched on top of his brown bag. However, he along with his friendly puppets will introduce the Little Bear stories by Else Holmelund Minarik on a daily basis for a total of three to four weeks. Besides talking about the life-style of bears, Mr. Friday and his friends will ask the children for predictions about the various little bear stories, and introduce vocabulary words found in the stories. The puppets will elicit discussions from the children about the stories we are reading. For example, in the book *Little Bear* there is a story, "Little Bear Goes to the Moon." While thinking upon the title, the children may suggest that Little Bear will imagine or pretend that he is traveling to the moon. They will brainstorm about various ways for Little Bear to travel to the moon. They will be asked to listen to the story and think about how Little Bear pretends he is going to the moon. "Do you think that if you believe in yourself that anything is possible? Why or why not?" After reading the story, the children will be asked if they think the story is fiction or nonfiction. "Are there any events that happen in the story that could really happen? Which ones could not happen?" Mother Bear plays along with Little Bear's imaginary game. "Does your mother play imaginary games with you? Tell us how your mother plays with you." A follow up activity will be a written assignment where the children think about a pretend place that they would like to visit, and tell how they will travel there.

The children will also retell stories through their own puppet creations and illustrated works. They will be able to form groups of two, three, or four making puppets to represent various characters in a story, and then retell it in class.

Art activities will also be included in the lessons. One example will be illustrating the story in sequential drawings. Sequential activities are important and help to enhance comprehension skills. Various graphic organizers, story maps, and journals will also help the children in remembering and interpreting the little bear stories. Making an animated movie of one of Minarik's stories, with the children making characters that move across a background scene while another child reads their written works, will be a fun activity.

We couldn't omit trying our hand at cooking after reading *Father's Flying Flapjacks*. Let's hope that none of

ours lands on the floor for the bugs to enjoy, as happened in the story.

A visit to a zoo such as Bearsley Zoo in Bridgeport or the Bronx Zoo in New York would be fun and interesting for gathering additional information about bears. Also, the children will discuss and make a graphic organizer showing characteristics of real bears and the pretend bears in Minarik's stories. As a class, the children will brainstorm a list of responsibilities for a zookeeper. Our game center contains a zoo set. The children will set up a pretend zoo and play the role of a zookeeper. The Internet and library will be good sources for gathering information about bears. Those children who use these resources will report their findings in class.

A nature hike at the Whitney Water Works will help us relive the Little Bear stories as we pretend that we are Little Bear and his friends walking through the forest. We will pretend that our forest is enchanted and all of the creatures become our friends as we learn about the plants, insects, and animals that inhabit the area.

The children will interview various family members asking them about their childhood days and what they did for play. A special "Grandmother's Tea" or "Mother's Tea" will be arranged. Grandmothers or mothers will be invited to attend our class giving stories about their childhood days and allow the children to ask questions. We will learn about the traditions and customs of a "tea." The children will be encouraged to practice their best manners.

A culminating activity will be a drama production called "Little Bear is Lost." The production will be rehearsed in the classroom or in our Extended Day Academy and produced on stage for a school wide assembly sometime near the end of the school year.

## **Little Bear Stories by Else Holmelund Minarik**

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Minarik's Little Bear stories contain many varied topics or themes under child development. I have decided to group some of her stories under specific themes or topics. The categories that I will be utilizing for the Little Bear stories are: Adventure, Family, and Relationships.

### **Adventure**

#### *Week One -- Day One and Two*

Every child's eyes light up when one mentions "bears." Today's toy stores are filled with bears that come in all sorts of shapes, sizes, and colors. Most children's lives would not be devoid of a stuffed bear. Mention a "Bear Party" where children are allowed to bring a stuffed bear to their classroom for a day -- hands immediately go up, and the children want to tell about their prized collections. Before we begin our adventures with Little Bear, we will glean some knowledge about the real world of bears..

In her book, *Nature's Children: Black Bears* (5) Greenland reminds us that although bears, cubs in particular, look as though they belong in a toyshop waiting to be purchased, loved, and hugged, mother bear may be lurking nearby and one should be extremely careful. A mother bear will go to great lengths to protect her cubs even if that means physically harming an innocent observer.

Greenland goes on to tell us that Black Bears are found mainly in North America and Canada with a distant

cousin living in the mountains and forests of Asia. Some bears hibernate as long as six months depending how cold it is, and how readily they can depend upon their food source. Cubs are generally born in January or February while the mother is sleeping. What a grand surprise to awake and find out that a new family has arrived! (Greenland, *Nature's Children: Black Bears* , page 33)

The children will have a fun time along with Happy Friday guessing which bear is the largest. Happy Friday will eventually pull out Greenland's book *Nature's Children: Polar Bears* and show the beautiful pictures containing photos of polar bears in their natural surroundings. Unlike its distant relative the black bear, polar bears cannot survive in a warm climate. Greenland describes an undercoat of hair next to the bear's skin that helps to trap the body temperature, and keep the bear warm. (Greenland, *Nature's Children: Polar Bears*, page 12) Panda bears are only found in the mountains of western China. There they consume large amounts of bamboo, find a safe place to build a nest, and give birth to their young in the spring.

Happy Friday reminds the children that a bear party is planned for the following day. On this particular day the children are allowed to bring a favorite bear of their own or a borrowed one from a friend or relative. During our party, the children will participate in math games were they sort gummy bears into sets of various colors, put them onto a graph, and then analyze and describe their graphs. Which set has the least/most/same? How can you tell?

Happy Friday prepares the children for the Little Bear stories that are about to begin. He shows them one of the books and asks them if they think we will be reading fiction or non-fiction stories. We will also discuss the characteristics that we learned about real bears and compare them to the bears in our stories. Are there any characteristics that could be true? Why or why not? Do you like the idea that bears will be talking in the stories? Why or why not? As we read the stories, think of another animal that the author could have used instead of bears. Also, think about why the author decided to use bears instead of another character.

Happy Friday tells the children that they are encouraged to make puppet characters at the art center. Groups of four children work at the art center. They will decide what character they want to make from the story. As a group they will act out the story with their puppet creations.

### *Week One -- Day Threee*

A friend of Happy Friday, Willie, will take us on an adventure with *Little Bear and the Missing Pie*. The children discover that Hen and Father Bear are enjoying the pie that was thought to be missing by Little Bear and his friends. However, while trying to find the pie, the characters come across some clues -- a feather that belongs to Duck who just happens to be eating raspberries in the raspberry patch, a missing shoe that belongs to Emily, and eventually Hen's tracks that lead them to the missing pie. After reading the story, Willie will ask the children if the mystery in the story was scary or not. Why or why not? Could you think of a mystery story that could be scary? What is a clue? How were clues used in the story? Did Duck eat all of the raspberries or did someone else pick raspberries too? When Little Bear said that there are a lot of raspberries gone from the patch, did he mean that Duck had eaten all of them? Or was this perhaps another clue? At the writing center, the children will be asked to write and illustrate their own story. They will be asked to write about something missing and give clues for finding it..

We will use a wheel-like graphic organizer with spokes and write all of the clues from the story. Can we include Emily's missing shoe as a clue? Why or why not?

After ascertaining that the pie in the story was raspberry, the children will be asked to tell about their favorite

pie. The pies will be graphed onto a chart so that the children can tell which flavored pie got the least/most/same votes.

### *Week One -- Day Fourr*

Tuesday's Cup of Sugar -- who is big on pretending -- will assist in introducing our next set of stories found in the book *k Father Bear Comes Home*. She will be a good assistant for this role -- after all, she is a monkey dressed in doll clothes who just happens to relish getting into trouble and then asking the children for their forgiveness and help.. The story centers upon imagination, and how much fun it can be when friends and family become part of the make-believe adventure. Father Bear is out fishing -- way out on the ocean. Mother Bear needs a fish before Father Bear can bring one home, so Little Bear is asked to bring home a fish. However, after catching a little fish, Little Bear pretends along with his friends that he is catching a large octopus and a whale. Little Bear is convinced that Father Bear will bring something exciting home. He tells his friends that Father Bear will bring home a mermaid. Father Bear did not bring home a mermaid, but on a picnic Mother and Father Bear encourage Little Bear's imagination by telling him to invite the mermaid to their picnic if he happens to see one..

Tuesday's Cup of Sugar will invite children to discuss fishing trips with their family members. They will be asked to bring stories to class about fishing excursions. Where did they go fishing? What kind of fish were they fishing for? Were they fishing from a boat, a pier, or a bank? What is the difference between a boat, pier, or a bank? Some children do not know the meaning of a bank. Tuesday will describe a bank -- that is the side of a stream, river, or lake. He will also ask them for another meaning to the word, "bank."

Tuesday will ask the children about the mermaid in the story. Is Little Bear disappointed that Father Bear did not bring home a mermaid? Why or why not? He told his friends that Father Bear would bring one home. Is he embarrassed in front of his friends when Father Bear did not produce one? How did Mother Bear and Father Bear help Little Bear to overcome his embarrassment? Do your parents help pretend with you? How?

The children will be asked to write and illustrate a story about a make-believe fishing trip. How could you use your imagination and hook something on your fishing line that would be really big? What would you do with it?

## **Family**

### *Week One (Day Five)*

One could surmise that Alphabet Thursday is a distant relative of Little Bear except for the fact that perhaps his head is not as round and his fur is bright red. His voice certainly would pass for a bear with his deep guttural sounds. So he will be perfect for introducing our story, *Father's Flying Flapjacks*. He will ask the children for a prediction. What are flapjacks? Why are they called flying flapjacks? Do you think Little Bear helped Father Bear make the flapjacks? What clues from the cover illustration do you see that would help you answer the question? Have you ever made pancakes? How did you make them?

After Alphabet Thursday reads the story, he will lead the class in a discussion. How did Father Bear and Little Bear make the pancakes? How are they trying to surprise Mother Bear? Where do you think she is while they are making the surprise? How do you think she feels when she sees the mess on the floor? Does it look like she is angry when the family sits down to eat the breakfast? Why or why not? Who do you think cleans up the mess?

The children will be asked to think about a time when they surprised their mother. What happened? Ask your family if they ever made a surprise and what happened. Ask your parents to help you write the story and bring it to class.

At the writing center, the children will be asked to choose a food item that they would like to prepare from a recipe and describe the steps showing how you would make it.

As a follow-up activity, the children will be encouraged to bring food from home that they have helped to prepare from a recipe. They will share the food and the receipt with their classmates at a special Recipe Day.

### *Week Two -- Day One*

By now it will be Monday in our unit about Little Bear stories. Blue Monday would be mighty disappointed if he were not invited to join in the fun of introducing the stories. Before he helps to read the story, he will ask the children what special day they think it will be in the story *Father Bear's Special Day*. What do you think fishing might have to do with the story? Fishing seems to be a recurring theme in our Little Bear stories. Why do you think the author includes fishing in many of the stories? Does it have anything to do with bears? Why or why not? If you were writing non-fiction stories about bears, what would you include in your stories?

Father Bear and Little Bear are going fishing on Father's Day. What would you have done if you were Little Bear and your friends wanted to tag along -- especially when you were planning a special time with your father? How did Little Bear feel when he had forgotten to bring the worms and Duck is able to dig for them so quickly? Did he feel any better when Emily helps him put the worms on the hook? Why not? The children will be asked to think about a time when they felt like Little Bear and write a story. The class will brainstorm and come up with various words that show feelings to use in their stories. In the story, Little Bear is able to get that special time with Father Bear. He also expresses the fact that he doesn't feel very competent in comparison to his friends. Father Bear reassures him that he is a wonderful bear and having him for a son is a great Father's Day present. Then he gives Little Bear a hug and a kiss. The children will be asked to write a conclusion to their story telling how someone helped to take away their sad or disappointed feelings..

A special Father's Day will be planned for a future date. Fathers will be asked to come into the classroom and speak to the class. They will be asked to reflect upon a time when they were small and what effects family members had upon them in helping to mold their future.

### *Week Two -- Day Two*

Grandparents can play a very special role in the lives of children. We will begin this special day by calling it "Grandparents' Tea." In advance, we will invite grandparents to our class. Perhaps they would like to bring a special treat for our class. Grandparents have a lot of special stories to tell from their childhood days. We will invite them to tell stories and bring any memorabilia that they may have to show our class. If our grandparents cannot come, we will be happy if our mothers want to come and participate in place of grandparents.

Now we are ready to read our story, *To Grandmother's House*, with Wednesday Delight. Little Bear wants to take a gift to his grandparent's house. His mother helps him to fill his wagon with special treats -- soup, cookies, and a jar of jam. Little Bear adds some sweet smelling pine boughs. On his way he meets Duck, Cat, and Hen. He shares his special gifts with his friends, and then discovers that he does not have a gift for his grandparents. However, something else is in his wagon. His grandparents are so happy to see him, and are



delighted with the sweet-smelling pine boughs..

Wednesday Delight will ask the children if this story reminds them of another make-believe story -- perhaps a fairy tale. How is the story different? How is the story the same??

### *Week Two -- Day Threee*

Maurice Sendak illustrates the book, *Little Bear*. He uses a combination of black and white colors along with various shades of brown and blue for his illustrations. Although warm and nurturing, he gives more life-like characteristics to his characters. The expressions appear more stern, the eyes more compelling. We will discuss and compare the illustrations with some of the other books. The children will express their likes and dislikes, giving their reasons for choosing one over the other. Sendak uses both small and large pictures to depict scenes. Sometimes, he places various characters and things from the story around the written words. For example, in the story "Little Bear Goes to the Moon," there is a page where Little Bear is shown with a box on his head in a flying position at the top of the page, in a jumping position on both sides of the page, and a walking position at the bottom of the page. In our story for today, "Birthday Soup," he uses the vegetables from the soup to blend in with the border on the page. He uses a border on every page giving the book a feeling that it happened a very long time ago. In other words, one feels as if they are reading a classic. Perhaps we are!

Willie will assist in reading the story, "Birthday Soup," from our book, *Little Bear*.

Just mention the word "birthday," and every child shares their birthday date, trying to tell you about a special birthday that they have experienced. Or the children may remember that a sister, brother, uncle, aunt, mother, or father -- any family member's birthday will soon be celebrated. After Willie reads the story, he will ask the children how their birthday dinner would be different if they had a hen, duck, or cat at their party. What foods do suppose you would serve? How would you serve them? Little Bear invited his friends for his birthday. Mother Bear was not around. He thought she had forgotten his birthday. So he makes vegetable soup for his friends. Then Mother Bear arrives with a birthday cake. Do you think it was a good idea for Little Bear to prepare the birthday soup without his mother's assistance? Why or why not? Why do you suppose Little Bear did not know where Mother Bear had gone? Do you think she had gone far? Why??

In Ann McGovern's book, *Stone Soup*, some of the same ingredients are used to make a soup. The story will be read in class. The children will discuss and compare both stories. How are they alike? How are they different? We will use a diagram called a venn diagram to compare and contrast the two stories. We will place two large overlapping circles on chart paper. One circle will represent *Stone Soup*, and the other circle will represent "Birthday Soup." If a description is different we will place it under the perspective title. If it is the same we will place it in the overlapping part of the circle.

The children will write a story about a special birthday memory. They will illustrate their story using the same colors that Maurice Sendak used in his illustrations. They will also add a border around their story like the one Sendak used in the *Little Bear* book.

### *Week Two, Day Four*

Willie will help to introduce today's story, *Little Bear's Visit*. We will notice that Sendak uses green instead of the blue in his black, white and brown illustrations. After hearing the story, the children will decide which color they like best -- green or blue. We will discuss if the green or blue gives us a different feeling after reading the

two stories. For example, in the book *Little Bear*, the first story talks about winter. The illustrations show snow. Does blue give one a colder feeling than green? In today's book most of the story takes place outside in a garden. How does green help us to think about a garden in the summer time? Perhaps you have other suggestions why Sendak chose those colors. Tell us about your ideas.

In the story, Little Bear's grandparents tell him stories. Grandma tells a story about when Little Bear's mother was small. She finds a baby robin that is too little to fly and cannot find its nest. Mother Bear takes the baby robin inside her house. She nourishes it until it can fly about the house. One day, however, the little robin is sad. It cannot sing. It cannot fly. It said that its heart is sad. Mother Bear realizes that the robin must be set free. Before the robin flies away it tells Mother Bear that it loves her and that it will return every year.

Willie will lead the children in a discussion about birds migrating from colder regions to warmer climates. Why do some birds fly to warmer climates in the winter? He will ask the children to suggest a title for a story that tells about a mother bird and her babies making preparations to fly to a warmer climate for the winter. Then the class will write a story. What do you think will happen in the story? Where do you think the story will take place? What illustrations do you think we should use in the story? The class will draw the various pictures for the story.

Willie tells the children that bears do not migrate to warmer climates for the winter but they do something else. He pulls out a sleeping bag, and pajamas from his box. Do you think that bears use these during the winter months? Why do we use them? Willie asks the children if they remember what we learned about bears hibernating during the winter. He leads the children in a review discussion about hibernation. Our Breakthrough to Literacy program has a lovely book called *Time for Bed, Little Bear*. It is an endearing story about a mother bear and her little cub preparing for the winter months. After reading the story, Willie tells the children that Mother Bear wants her cub to go into the cave before winter sets in. However, Little Bear wants to wait for winter. Why do you think that Mother Bear thinks going into the cave is important? Why does Little Bear want to stay up longer and wait for winter? Do you like to stay up late? Why?

### *Week Two, Day Five*

Happy Friday will ask the children to make a prediction thinking about the title, *Mother Bear's Picnic*, and by looking at the cover picture. Why do you suppose the title says that it is Mother Bear's picnic? Why wouldn't it tell us that it is a family picnic, or perhaps Little Bear's picnic? Father Bear is dressed in a suit and tie; Mother Bear is dressed in a long skirt and blouse. Do you think that they are dressed for a picnic? How do you dress when you go on a picnic? Why? Let's read the story and find out who went on the picnic, and why the picnic was for Mother Bear.

We will proceed to use a story map. The story map will help us with comprehension skills. First we will discuss the setting of the story. We want to know exactly where the story takes place. "In the garden" will not give us enough information. We want to know exactly what kind of garden it is, and where the picnic will be held in the garden. For example, the story takes place in the flower garden under a dogwood tree. Then we will proceed to tell about the characters, giving them vivid descriptions. For example, Father Bear is happy. He smiles throughout the story. He is dressed in a gray suit and tie. He looks as if he just came home from the office. After describing the characters, we will write about the problem in the story. Father Bear tells Mother Bear that the sandwiches are for a fishing trip. Mother Bear leaves the house looking very sad. Quickly Little Bear sets out on the garden path with the picnic basket. However, the basket is too heavy so he takes some of the plates and cups out of the basket and places them along the path. Then he hears Mother Bear's voice and hides behind a tree. Mother Bear sees the plates and cups and returns to the house for a basket. The solution

begins when Little Bear gathers the plates and cups, spreads out a blanket and sets three places. He is picking flowers for Mother when he hears Mother and Father returning down the path. Mother Bear is laughing and telling Father Bear how happy she is that he is going to help her with the plates and cups that she found by the path. Little Bear jumps up and surprises her with the Mother's Day picnic.

The children will write about a special family outing that they have experienced with their family. They will describe the setting, think about and write a problem that they have experienced, and explain the solution. They will also describe the characters in their story, using descriptive words to describe how they were dressed, and what sort of mood they displayed.

This will be a great time for our nature hike. Also, we will incorporate a picnic. It will be fun to bring our bears again. We will brainstorm about what foods we want to serve. But then again, if we think about Little Bear's picnic foods, sandwiches and lemonade, sound exactly like a picnic that we might consider.

### *Week Three -- Day One*

It is Blue Monday's turn to introduce and read our book, *A Present for Mother Bear*. It is Mother Bear's birthday. Father Bear is making a cake. Little Bear decides to pick wild flowers for Mother Bear. As he strolls through the forest, he meets his friends. Each one has a perfect present that they want to exchange for Little Bear's present. In the end, everyone has their original presents and Little Bear gives Mother Bear the wildflowers. Blue Monday will lead the children in a discussion about choosing gifts for family members. How do you decide what gifts to give? Did Little Bear go to the store for his gift? Why not? Do gifts have to be purchased from stores? Why? Why do you suppose Mother Bear thought Little Bear's gift was perfect? Mother Bear gave Little Bear a kiss. Little Bear said that the kiss was sweeter than the flowers. Why do suppose Little Bear made that statement? Father Bear asked Mother Bear what she thought about the cake. Mother Bear gave him a kiss too and said that his cake was sweet also. Why is it important to thank everyone for the kindness that they show?

Today after reading the story we will prepare a graphic organizer using a sequence-of-events map. We will write each event in a box then place an arrow pointing to the next box and write the next event. We will use boxes and arrows until all of the boxes have been filled.

## **Relationships**

### *Week Three -- Day Two*

Tuesday's Cup of Sugar comes out and tells the class that she is having a very bad day. She lost her hat. When she found it there was a big hole in it. The banana that she was going to eat for breakfast has turned all soft and brown. She only found one shoe and that one has paint splattered all over it. She suggests that perhaps she could be excused so she could sleep and come another day. Before Tuesday leaves, she asks a student to read our story, *Little Bear's Bad Day*, to the class. The children discover that Little Bear is also having a bad day. In the story, Little Bear spills his milk, he knocks over his paint, the kite jumps out of his hand, and he snags his finger on a fishing hook. Little Bear is discouraged. He climbs a tree and tries to sleep. His friends come along and cheer him up by telling him that he is a good friend. They encourage him by saying that he makes them happy, and that they always have a fun time together.

Tuesday's Cup of Sugar comes out again. The children tell her about Little Bear's bad day. Tuesday asks the children if they have ever had a bad day? She reminds the children about Cat and Hen and what they did to

encourage Little Bear. Does it help when someone is having a bad day to poke fun at them and call them names? How could you help someone who is having a bad day?

Tuesday tells the children that today they will write a story. In the story they will tell about a bad day. What happened during your bad day? Did someone come along and encourage you? Write about it.

### *Week Three, Day Three*

A good book to follow *Little Bear's Bad Day* is *A Kiss for Little Bear*. Little Bear draws a picture for Grandma Bear. Hen is asked to deliver the picture to Grandma. Grandma is very pleased with the picture and asks Hen to send a kiss to Little Bear. The kiss is passed to a lot of animal friends and finally ends up with Little Bear.

After Wednesday Delight reviews the sequence of events in the story, she will tell the children to look at the detailed drawings that Maurice Sendak made for the story. All of the animals have minute detailed lines showing their fur and feathers. Even the trees, grass, and leaves have those same detailed lines that make them stand out and seem life-like. Wednesday will ask the children to choose a character from the story and try to imitate Sendak's pictures. They will write a sentence describing what their animal is doing.

### *Week Three, Day Four*

Alphabet Thursday asks the children if they have ever had a loose tooth. Of course, all of the children want to share their experiences. -- first graders love to do that! He tells them to wait for their responses. How do you think Little Bear's tooth will come out? On the cover we see Cat and Hen. Do you think they will have any suggestions for their friend? How do you think the tooth will come out? Suppose Little Bear puts the tooth under this pillow. Do you think the tooth fairy will remember Little Bear? What will the tooth fairy bring to Little Bear? After the story is read by Alphabet Thursday, the children discover that Emily, Cat, Duck, and Owl all have different suggestions for pulling the tooth, but none of them work. It's Mother Bear's corn on the cob that brings the tooth out. Little Bear is so happy that he wants to whistle. However, he discovers that he cannot whistle. What does the tooth fairy bring Little Bear? Of course, a nice big, red, shiny whistle!!

Alphabet Thursday tells the children that now it is their turn to write about their loose tooth and the tooth fairy. He will tell them that they will draw three pictures -- their loose tooth, how the tooth came out, and what they did with the tooth..

### *Week Three, Day Five*

Happy Friday will share the last Little Bear book that we will be using in our unit, *Little Bear's Friend*. Little Bear meets a new friend in this story. Actually we have met her before -- Emily. But we did not know how Little Bear met her. Emily and her family are camping in the woods nearby Little Bear's house. Emily introduces her doll, Lucy, to Little Bear. The three of them become good friends. At the end of the summer, Little Bear is sad to see Emily leave. She almost gives her doll Lucy to him, but gives Little Bear a fountain pen instead. Soon after she has gone, Little Bear writes a letter to his good friend, Emily..

Happy Friday asks the children why they think the author brings a human character to the Little Bear stories. Also, it is interesting that Emily is the only human character in the stories, and she is not in all of the stories. Could we pretend to be Emily in the story? Is it impossible to imagine that we are the other animal characters?

The children are told by Happy Friday that he wants to thank all of his friends for helping to share the Little Bear stories with our class. He suggests that the children write a letter to one of the puppets telling about a

favorite Little Bear book and why they liked the book. He will also remind the children that the Little Bear books are in our classroom library. They may read them during any free moments throughout the day.

Happy Friday tells the children that he is going to choose a friend from our room. Everyone is going to write a letter to that person and place it in a special mailbox. They will begin just as Little Bear did to Emily telling about the weather. Then they will tell about something that they did at home with their family or a fun activity at school. They will end their letter by saying something kind about their friend. Everyday Happy Friday will choose a new friend for the class so that everyone receives a special letter.

## Standards

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### *Content Standard 1.0: Reading*

Demonstrate strategic reading skills.

- Students will discuss what they already know about the topic.
- Students will use phonics, word meaning and grammar clues to help in reading.
- Students will distinguish real events from make-believe.
- Students will show understanding by responding orally, in writing, through technology, and/or through the arts.

### *Content Standard 2.0: Writing*

Demonstrate successful writing behaviors.

- Students will establish a purpose by writing and make a plan.
- Students will use complete sentences, margins, headings, and correct spacing.
- Students will check for correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Students will keep a folder that demonstrates progress in writing.

### *Content Standard 3.0: Speaking*

Demonstrate strategic speaking skills.

- Students will speak courteously and respectfully to all persons.
- Students will share information and participate in discussion groups.

## Assessments

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The completed written works by the children serves as an assessment for the unit. In addition to the written stories, the teacher uses the rubric found at the end of the unit to evaluate oral and written responses. Students use the rubric for self-evaluation.

## Sample Lesson Plans

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### Lesson One

Story: *Father's Flying Flapjacks*

Objectives: Students will...

- listen to a story read to them by Alphabet Thursday (a classroom puppet).
- produce a creative written response.
- share the written response in class.

*Procedures:*

1. Alphabet Thursday will ask the children for a prediction and read the story in class.
2. Thursday will lead the class in a discussion. Who are Father Bear and Little Bear trying to surprise? Why? What are flapjacks? Are they the same as pancakes? Why? Do we have enough information to make our own flapjacks? Why or why not?
3. The children will use a hand drawing for sequencing the story. On each finger they will write what happened in the story. For example, on the thumb they will write that Little Bear got Father Bear awake so that they could start the surprise. On the next finger they will write about the bears getting the bowls and griddle ready, etc. On the palm of the hand they will draw an illustration from the story.
4. At the writing center, the children will choose a food item and tell the steps for preparing it.

5. As a follow-up activity, the children may bring in a food item that they have helped to prepare along with the receipt and share both with the class.

6. The receipts will be collected and placed into a receipt book. A copy will be given to each child.

## **Lesson Two**

*Activity: Grandparent's Tea*

Objectives: Students will...

- interact in a class discussion.
- design a creative invitation.
- help to produce a written response.

*Procedures:*

1. Willie (a classroom puppet) will talk to the children about our social activity. He will explain that grandparents will be coming to our classroom and that we want to show our best manners. He will brainstorm with the children about proper etiquette. We will chart the suggestions from the children.
2. The children will discuss and plan a menu for the event.
3. The children will design an invitation for their grandparents.
4. The class will help to write a letter to the grandparents asking them to join us for a "Tea." We will ask them to tell stories from their childhood days and bring any tokens to share when they were small.

## **Lesson Three**

*Story: To Grandmother's House*

Objectives: Students will...

- listen to a story read by Wednesday Delight (a classroom puppet).
- produce a creative written response and illustration.
- share a written response along with a small group of children.

*Procedures:*

1. The children will work in a small group to produce a background of the story read to them by Wednesday Delight. The background drawing will be placed onto a paper bag.
2. The children will decide in their small group which character they want to be in the story. Then they will proceed to make their characters and place them onto craft sticks.
3. The small group will retell the story using their stick characters and the background.

## Teacher's Bibliography

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Freschet, Berniece. *Grizzly Bear*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975.

Freschet tells a story about a year's life of a grizzly mother bear and her two cubs.

She tells a lovely story about the young family and their home in the mountainous terrain.

Greenland, Caroline. *Nature's Children: Black Bears*. Canada: Grolier Limited, 1986.

Lovely colored pictures of black bears in their natural habitat. The book contains lots of information about the black bear and his life style.

Greenland, Caroline. *Nature's Children: Polar Bears*. Canada: Grolier Limited, 1986.

Beautiful colored pictures of polar bears and their surroundings. The book contains information about the life-style and family habits of this beautiful Arctic animal.

Martin, Louise. *Panda*. Vero Beach: Rourke Enterprises, Inc., 1988. The book contains colorful photos of real pandas in China. Martin tells about the two kinds of pandas in China. There is the red panda and the giant panda. The smaller red panda is quite common, but the giant black and white pandas are very rare.

Perry, Richard. *Bears*. New York: Arco Publishing Company, Inc., 1970. A lovely book containing photos of bears in their natural habitat. Perry writes about bears from the Rockies to Siberia to the Arctic and Borneo including some of the glacier bears.

Pigdon, Keith and Woolley, Marilyn. *Grizzly Bears*. New York: Mondo Publishing, 1997. Beautiful colored photos and factual information of the grizzly bears.

## Children's Bibliography

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Cowley, Joy. *Time for Bed, Little Bear*. New York: Wright Group McGraw-Hill. A beautiful story of a mother bear and her cub preparing for the winter.

McGovern, Ann. *Stone Soup*, Scholastic, Inc. 1968. A beautiful story about a hungry young man who tricked an old lady into giving him some soup.



Minarik, Else Holmelund. *April Fools*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2003. A day for playing tricks -- April Fools Day. Little Bear wants to play a trick on his friends and have some fun.

Minarik, Else Holmelund, *Father Bear's Special Day*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2003. Little Bear is very excited because it is Father's Day and he and his father are going fishing. However, when all of his friends decide to go along Little Bear is disappointed because he wanted Father Bear all to himself.

Minarik, Else Holmelund, *Father's Flying Flapjacks*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2002. A young child's hard cover book with beautiful bright colored pictures. Little Bear and Father Bear decide to give Mother Bear a surprise breakfast. They make their famous flying flapjacks.

Minarik, Else Holmelund, *Father Bear Comes Home*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1987. The book contains four short stories about Little Bear and his friends. Father Bear returns from his long fishing trip. He doesn't bring home a mermaid like Little Bear was anticipating but it is still a delightful homecoming.

Minarik, Else Holmelund, *To Grandmother's House*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2002. Little Bear is going to visit his grandparents. He loads his wagon with delicious things for them. However, on the way he meets some of his hungry friends and shares the food with them.

Minarik, Else Holmelund, *A Kiss for Little Bear*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1996. Grandma Bear gives Hen a kiss and asks her to pass it to Little Bear. The kiss gets passed along to many animals and aids in the skunks romance. Finally Little Bear receives his kiss from Grandma.

Minarik, Else Holmelund, *Little Bear*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1985. This is the first in the series of Little Bear books that Minarik published. It contains three lovely stories about Little Bear's trip to the moon, his birthday party, and his wishes.

Minarik, Else Holmelund, *Little Bear's Bad Day*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2003. Little Bear is having a bad day -- all sorts of terrible things are happening. In order for Little Bear to feel better his friends will have to help him.

Minarik, Else Holmelund, *Little Bear's Friend*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher 1960. The third book in Minarik's series and all of the Little Bears friends are back -- Owl, Cat, Duck and Hen. In this book, Little Bear meets a new friend -- Emily. Emily introduces Little Bear to her doll and the three of them have lots of fun together.

Minarik, Else Holmelund, *Little Bear's Loose Tooth*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2002. Little Bear has a loose tooth and all of his friends have ideas about pulling the tooth. A delightful story for children who are at the stage of losing teeth.

Minarik, Else Holmelund, *Little Bear and the Missing Pie*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2002. A delightful story where Little Bear and his friends try to solve the mystery of the missing pie that Mother Bear baked for Father.

Minarik, Else Holmelund, *Mother Bear's Picnic*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2003. Little Bear and Father Bear plan a special surprise picnic for Mother Bear Mother's Day.

Minarik, Else Holmelund. *Little Bear's Visit*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1961. A visit to Grandma's place is a lot of fun for Little Bear because Grandma tells him stories about robins, goblins, and Mother Bear when she was little.

Minarik, Else Holmelund. *A Present for Mother Bear*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1958. Cousin Joan tells stories about alligators to Rosa and Willy. Sometimes they behave like the alligators in the stories.

Minarik, Else Holmelund. *A Present for Mother Bear*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2002. Little Bear wants to find the perfect

birthday present for Mother Bear. He asks his friends for suggestions. The friends all have a different idea about what Mother Bear would like for her birthday.

Minarik, Else Holmelund. *The Search for Spring*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2002. It's been a long cold winter. Little bear is ready for spring. But Little Bear is not sure just when spring will arrive. Little bear and his friends receive help from grumpy groundhog, and welcome their favorite season

## Assessment Key

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\*The following assessment key will be used to evaluate the following rubric.

### Social Skills

1 -- Seldom

2 -- Occasionally

3 -- Frequently

4 -- Always

### Academic Skills

1 -- Student demonstrates substantial inconsistencies that suggest the need for new learning.

2 -- Student demonstrates a partial understanding of the story. Inconsistencies detract from the meaning of the story.

3 -- Student demonstrates a sufficient understanding of the story. Errors do not detract from the meaning of the story.

4 -- Student demonstrates a clear and advanced understanding of the story and its meaning.

### ASSESSMENTS

**Smiley Face Rubric** --- Circle a face that shows how you did.

(images available in print form)

**“Terrific” “Good” “I can do better.”**

*Teacher Evaluation -- Oral and Writtenn*

Social Skills:

Listened to classmates 1 2 3 4

Complimented classmates' work 1 2 3 4

Shared and took turns 1 2 3 4

Academic Skills:

Shared ideas 1 2 3 4

Written response 1 2 3 4

## Appendix

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Little Lost Bear

### Scene I

(Mama Bear is baking cookies. Father Bear is reading the newspaper. Little Bear is playing with his toy truck.)

Narrator: This is the Bear's house. Father Bear just came home from work. He is enjoying a quiet time reading the newspaper. Mother Bear is busy baking cookies. Little Bear is getting bored playing alone.)

Little Bear: Mamma Bear, I am going to visit my friend, Mr. Owl.

Mamma Bear: You will need a picnic lunch. I will give you some fresh baked cookies and some milk for your picnic lunch. Take this scarf, Little Bear. It is a little cool today.

Little Bear: Thank you, Mamma Bear.

Father Bear: (Puts his newspaper down and peers over his reading glasses.) Don't forget to take the path to your right at the berry patch.

Little Bear: I won't forget, Father Bear. Good-bye Mamma Bear. Good-bye, Father Bear.

(Father Bear and Mamma Bear wave good-bye. Father Bear goes back to reading his newspaper. Mamma Bear cleans up from baking cookies.)

Little Bear: (Walks off stage and goes towards the back of the auditorium -- then he stops.) Oh dear, this is the berry patch, but did Father Bear say take the path to the right or to the left. The path to the left looks so much smoother than the path to the right. He must have told me to take the path to the left..

### Scene II

(Little Bear walks down the aisle and onto the stage. Then he sits under a tree and cries.)

Narrator: Little Bear took the wrong path at the berry patch. Father Bear told Little Bear to take the path to

the right. However, Little Bear forgot and took the path to the left. Little Bear has been walking for 30 minutes. To Little Bear it feels as if he has been walking for five hours.

Little Bear: I am so hungry. I think I will eat one cookie and have a drink of milk. I am so tired. I think I will go to sleep.

Narrator: While Little Bear is sleeping he has a dream. In his dream he meets many animal friends from the woods who want to take him to his friend, Mr. Owl. However, they each have their own special way for Little Bear to get to his friend.

Mr. and Mrs. Mouse: (Mr. and Mrs. Mouse skip down the aisle and up onto the stage.)

Mr. Mouse: Little Bear, we will take you to Mr. Owl.

Mrs. Mouse: Yes, we will take you to Mr. Owl. But you must skip away with us.

Mr. Mouse: Come Little Bear and skip away to Mr. Owl. Can you skip, Little Bear?

(Mr. and Mrs. Mouse skip off stage and to the back of the auditorium.)

Mrs. Skunk: (Mrs. Skunk enters the stage dressed in a long gown, and is carrying a pretty hat.)

Mrs. Skunk: Little Bear, I will take you to Mr. Owl. But first you must put on this pretty hat. You must pretend that you are a queen for a day. Or maybe you prefer to be a king for a day. That is all right. But can you pretend, Little Bear?

(Mrs. Skunk walks off stage with her pretty hat.)

Mr. Wolf: (Mr. Wolf runs down the aisle of the auditorium and onto the stage.)

Mr. Wolf: Little Bear, I can take you to Mr. Owl. But you must be very brave, and you must run very fast. Can you be brave and run fast, Little Bear?

(Mr. Wolf runs off stage and to the back of the auditorium.)

Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit: (Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit enter the stage hopping.)

Mr. Rabbit: Little Bear, we can take you to Mr. Owl. But you must hop away with us. Can you hop, Little Bear?

Mrs. Rabbit: Yes, we will take you to Mr. Owl. But you must dance with me. Can you dance with me, Little Bear?

(Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit exit the stage while hopping and dancing.)

### **Scene III**

Narrator: Little Bear awakes from his nap. He is afraid that he will never get to his friend, Mr. owl.

Little Bear: Oh dear, what am I going to do? I cannot skip like Mr. and Mrs. Mouse. I cannot pretend to be a king for a day. I am not brave, and I cannot run as fast as Mr. Wolf. I cannot hop and dance like Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit. I will never find my friend, Mr. Owl.

Mr. Owl: (Mr. Owl walks down the aisle of the auditorium.)

Mr. Owl: Who...who...who...would like to have a picnic with me today?

Little Bear: Mr. Owl, Mr. Owl, you found me. I would like to have a picnic with you today. Oh dear, I only have one cookie and a little milk. But I will share it with you.

#### **Scene IV**

Narrator: Little Bear shared his cookie and milk with his friend, Mr. Owl. Then Mr. Owl took Little Bear home.

Little Bear: (Gives Mother Bear a hug.) I am happy to be home, Mother Bear.

Mother Bear: I am happy that my Little Bear is safe.

Father Bear: Thank you, Mr. Owl, for bringing Little Bear home.

Mr. Owl: You are welcome. We will all have a picnic tomorrow at my house.

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