

LONGWOOD GARDENS

The Enormous Potato

Toolkit Activities

The Longwood Gardens Community Read is a program designed to encourage reading for pleasure and start a conversation. Focusing on literature about gardens, plants, and the natural world, we feature an exceptional book annually (paired with similarly-themed middle school and younger readers' books) through a variety of programs, discussions, and lectures across all community partner organizations. For more information about the Community Read, go to www.longwoodgardens.org/community-read.



Community Read
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Meets the following Next Generation Science Standards:

[K-ESS3-1 Earth and Human Activity](#)

Use a model to represent the relationship between the needs of different plants and animals (including humans) and the places they live.

[2-LS2-1 Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics](#)

Plan and conduct an investigation to determine if plants need sunlight and water to grow.

Meets the following Common Core standards:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.2](#)

With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.3](#)

With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.10](#)

Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.2](#)

Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.3](#)

Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.



The Enormous Potato retold by Aubrey Davis

Overview / Synopsis

The Enormous Potato is a cumulative tale in which a farmer plants a potato. This potato grows to be so large that he can't get it out of the ground by himself. He calls his wife for help. She calls for more help, and so on. As each helper comes, the lines are repeated. Once the potato is out, there is enough for the entire village to eat.

Activities

Hot Potato Retell

- Sequence the Story
- Hot Potato

What Part are You?

Grow a Potato

Mask-Making

Potato Stamping

Extend the Story (for older children)

Make Your Own Story

Silly Story

Making Words



Hot Potato Retell

Materials Needed

- Sequence cards (print needed amount from template and cut out)
- Small potato

Part A Directions

Retell the story *The Enormous Potato* using sequence cards

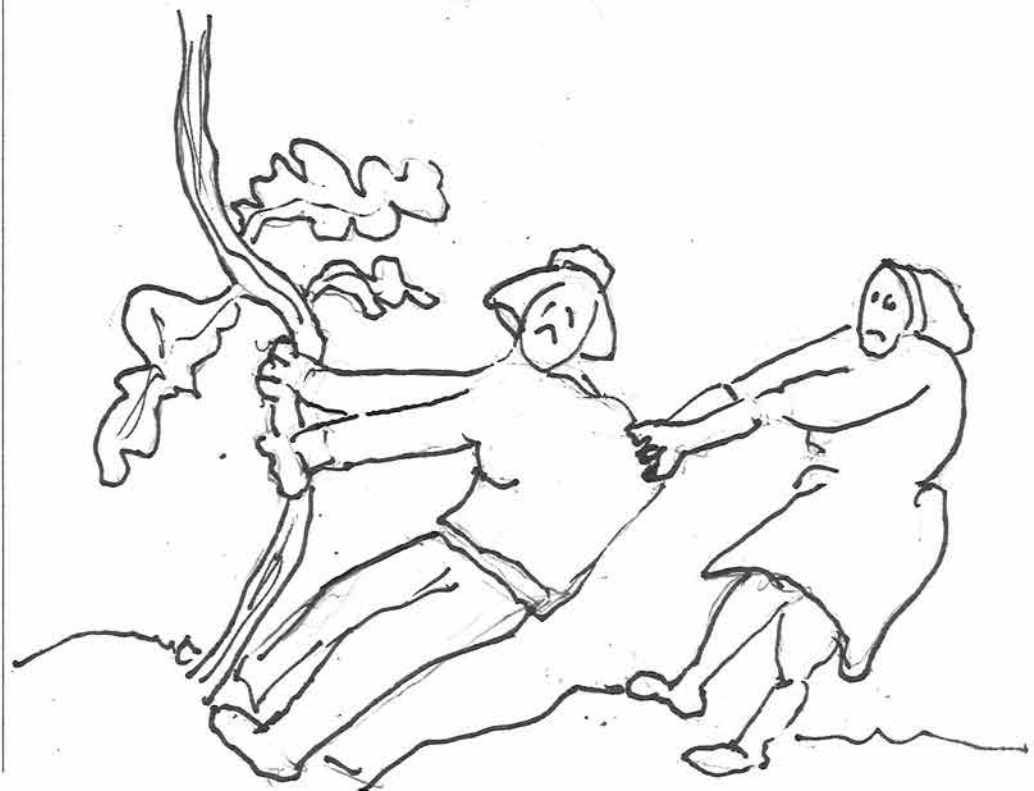
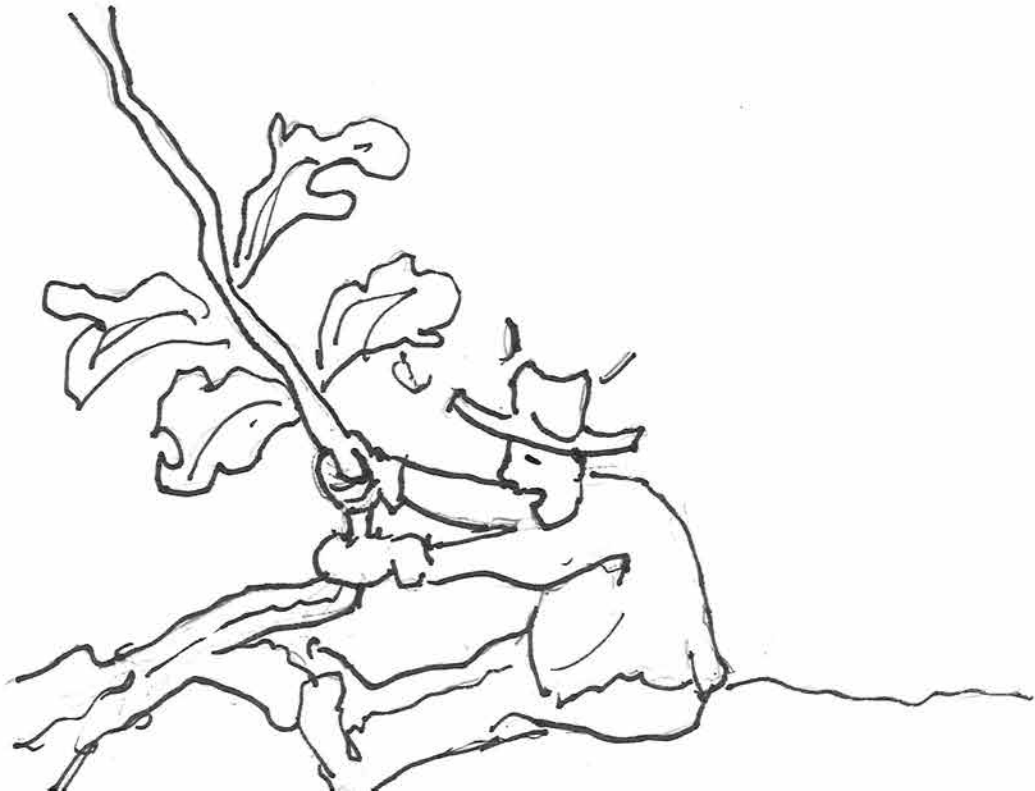
- This activity may be done individually, in a small group, or in a large group.
- After reading the story *The Enormous Potato*, distribute sequence cards.
- Ask the children to look at their cards and find the card that corresponds to the beginning of the story.
- Continue to add cards to follow the sequence of the story until the ending of the story has been added.
- Children could line up in the correct order of the story, holding up their card, or they could lay the cards on a table in the correct order.

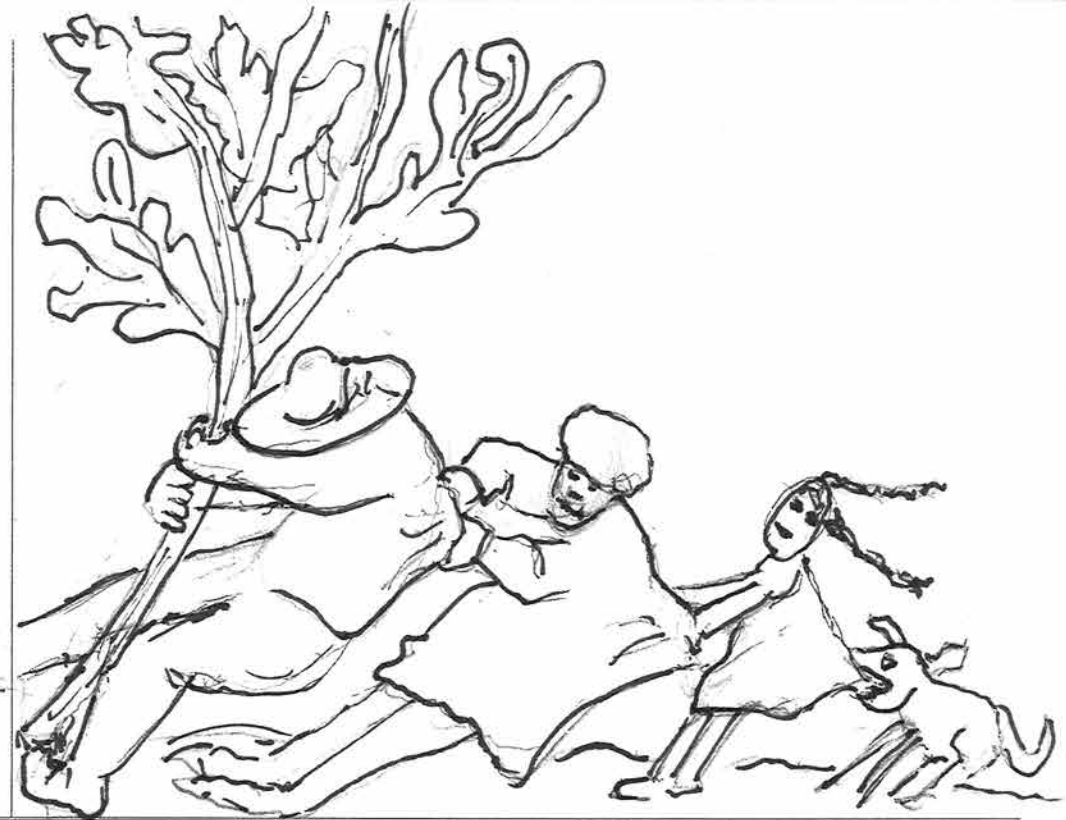
Part B Directions

Retell the story of *The Enormous Potato* using the potato to take turns

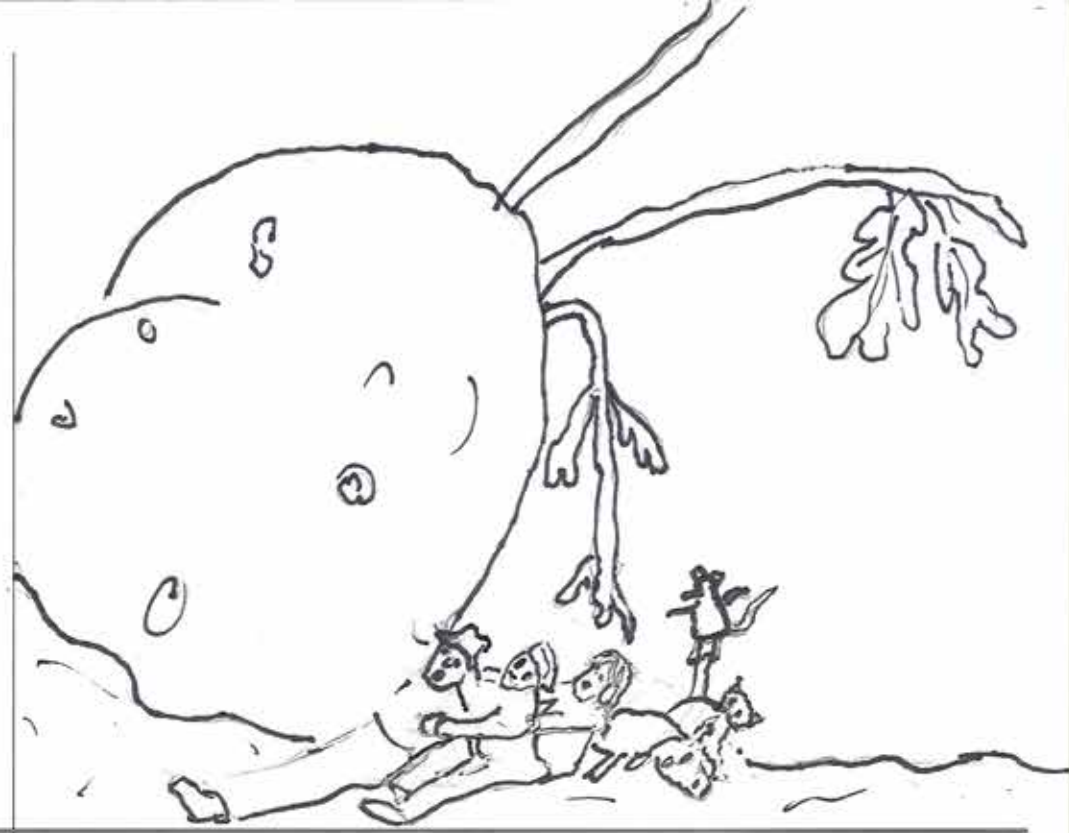
- After reading the story *The Enormous Potato*, have children sit in a circle.
- Leader will start at the beginning of the story and retell the first page of the book in their own words.
- They will roll the potato to a child to continue the story. The next child rolls the potato to another child and so on until the group has completed retelling the story in their own words.







SEQUENCE CARDS



What Part Are You?

Materials Needed

- Plant part cards (print needed amount from template)
- Plant parts diagram (print from template)
- Assorted plastic or real fruits & vegetables

Directions

Review the parts of a plant using the provided diagram or other resource.

Spread the fruits and vegetables out on a flat surface. Have students sort them into groups by what part of the plant is eaten:

- Flower
- Fruit
- Root
- Stem
- Leaf
- Above Ground
- Below Ground



Leaf

Root

Above Ground

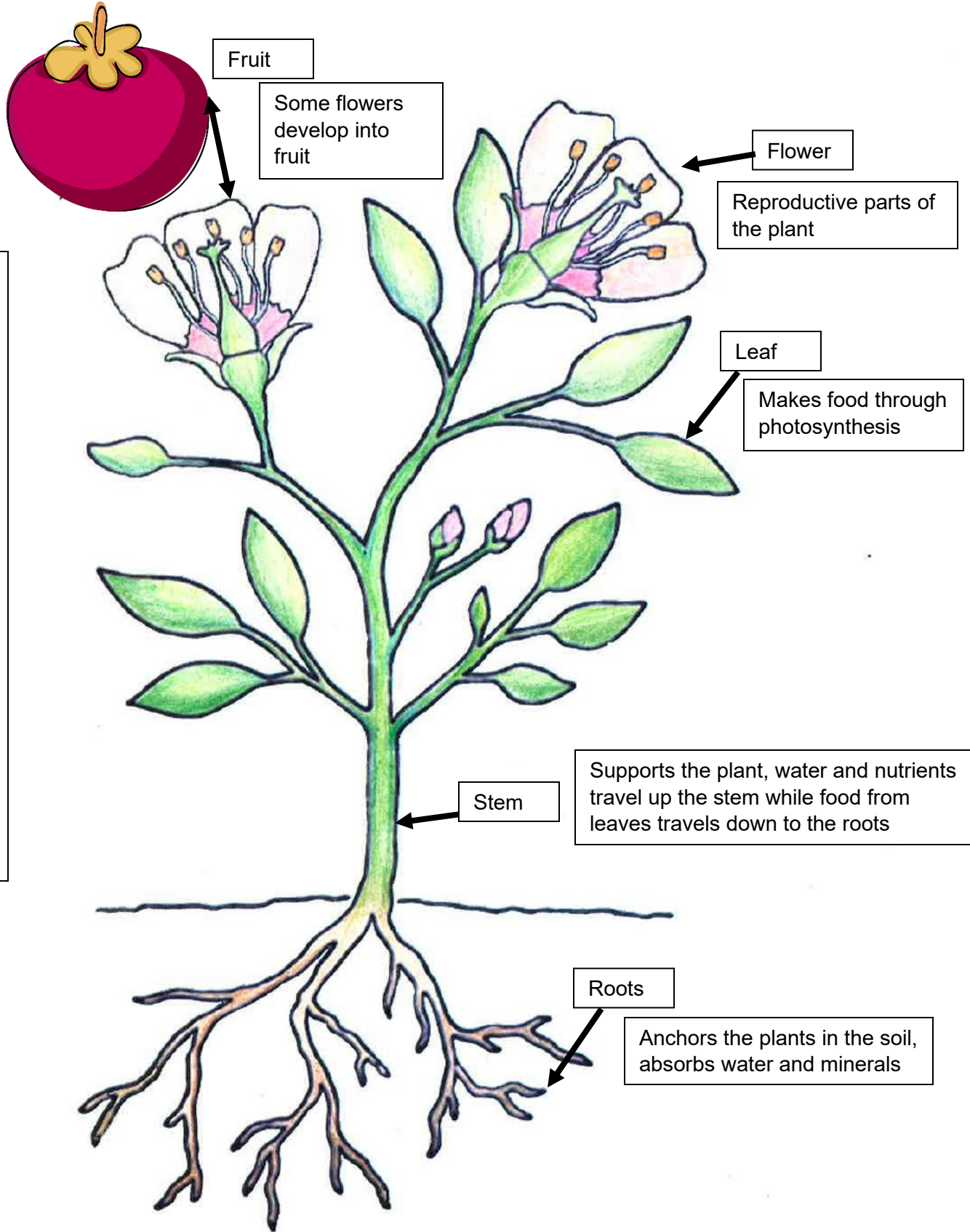
Below Ground

Stem

Flower

Fruit

Plant Parts Diagram



Fruit

Some flowers develop into fruit

Flower

Reproductive parts of the plant

Leaf

Makes food through photosynthesis

Stem

Supports the plant, water and nutrients travel up the stem while food from leaves travels down to the roots

Roots

Anchors the plants in the soil, absorbs water and minerals

Above Ground

Below Ground

Grow a Potato

Note: Ideal time for this activity is early April

Materials Needed

- *The Enormous Potato* by Aubrey Davis
- Small seed potatoes from a garden center, or ordered online (Need to have on hand a week or two prior to activity)
- Egg carton(s)
- Paper cups (large enough to hold the seed potato)
- Variety of art supplies to decorate paper cups
- Seed Potato Instructions (print needed amount from template)

Instructions

1. One to two weeks before activity, put the small seed potatoes in an open egg carton in a sunny window, so they can start to sprout.
2. On the day of the activity, read *The Enormous Potato* as storytime.
3. Discuss how potatoes grow:
 - a. Potatoes come from other potatoes. The “eyes” on potatoes are buds.
 - b. When a whole potato with eyes, or just part of a potato with an eye is planted, a stem and leaves will grow out of the eye.
 - c. The stem and leaves will eventually grow above the ground and flower.
 - d. The underground stem will grow and spread into more potatoes.
4. Give each child a cup to decorate with supplied art materials.
5. As they leave, give them a seed potato in their cup to take home and plant, with attached instructions.



Seed Potato Instructions

- Plant approximately two weeks after last spring frost (approx. end of April).
- With a hoe or round-point shovel, dig a hole about six inches wide and eight inches deep in a sunny area, tapering the bottom to about three inches wide.
- If possible, spread and mix in organic compost in the bottom of the hole before planting.
- Place the seed potato in the hole and cover with three to four inches of soil.

Twelve to sixteen days after planting, when sprouts appear, use a hoe to gently fill in the trench with another three to four inches of soil, leaving a few inches of the plants exposed.

- Repeat in several weeks, leaving the soil mounded up four to five inches above ground level (this is called “hilling”).
- Surround plant with mulch. Water regularly.
- “New potatoes,” which are potatoes that are purposefully harvested early for their smaller size and tender skin, will be ready for harvest two to three weeks after the plants stop flowering.
- Dig them up on a dry day.
- Allow freshly dug potatoes to sit in a dry, cool place (45–60°F) for up to two weeks. This allows their skins to cure, which will help them keep for longer.
- After curing, make sure you brush off any soil clinging to the potatoes, then store them in a cool, somewhat humid, dark place. The ideal temperature for storage is 38 to 40°F.

Do not consume green potatoes, or any parts of a potato that are green. Consuming green potatoes may cause illness.

Instructions adapted from The National Gardening Association (garden.org)



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Mask-Making

After reading *The Enormous Potato*, provide children with the opportunity to create a mask of one of the characters in the story.

Materials Needed

- 9-inch paper plates with holes pre-cut for eyes, a hole punched on either side for yarn, and yarn tied through the holes to tie around head
- Crayons
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Other art supplies as needed

Choose one of the characters from *The Enormous Potato*. Make a mask of their face. Be creative!

- Farmer
- Farmer's Wife
- Farmer's Daughter
- Dog
- Cat
- Mouse
- Townsperson

If desired, read the story again and have the children act out the story wearing the masks!



Potato Stamping

Materials Needed

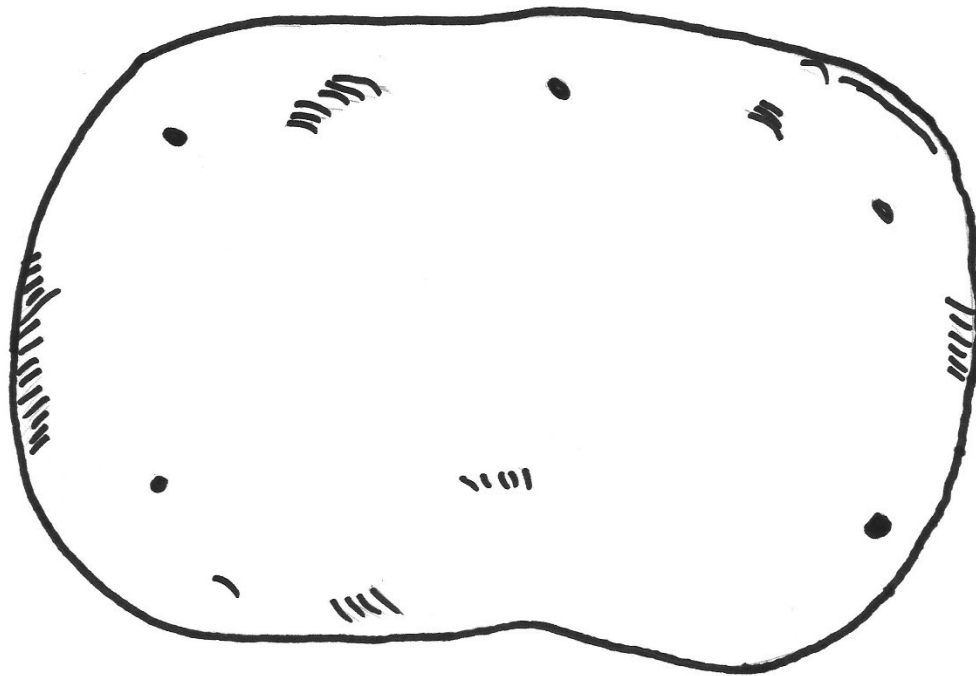
- Several potatoes (at least six)
- Sharp knife
- Washable paint
- Potato template (print needed amount from template)
- Paint brushes
- Googly-eyes
- Crayons, markers
- Glue

Directions

- Prior to activity, cut potatoes in half and allow to dry slightly.
- With a marker, draw a simple outline of the face of the farmer, wife, daughter, dog, cat and mouse from *The Enormous Potato* (your interpretation – does not need to copy the book) on the cut sides of the potatoes - one face on each. Dependent upon number of children expected, it may be good to have two or more potato stamps of each face.
- Using a knife, cut around the drawing to take away some of the excess potato for a raised design.
- Using the included potato template, print enough copies for each child.
- For the activity, provide the potato stamps, washable paint, paint brushes, googly-eyes, crayons & markers.
- Children can brush a light layer of paint on the raised part of the stamp, then stamp it on the paper next to the potato. Each character can be stamped surrounding the potato. Googly eyes can be attached to the wet paint or glued on after drying.
- Crayons or markers can be used to add whiskers, hair, or other details.



The Enormous Potato



Make Your Own Story

Materials Needed

- Pencils
- Paper
- Colored pencils

Directions

Explain to students that *The Enormous Potato* is a story where the characters all depend on each other. Each character calls someone special to them to help. Now it's their turn to write their own story. Students should:

- Decide what enormous vegetable or fruit they will plant.
- Who are the people they would call to help them? It could be family, friends, or characters from books, TV or movies. They'll need four or five!
- They should write their story using the same repeating format as *The Enormous Potato*.
- At the end of their story, they should describe how they will celebrate the success of working together to get the job done.

In addition to writing a story, students could create a comic book depicting their story using a comic template found online.

- Draw the action using colored pencils.
- Write the words in speech bubbles.



Silly Story

Materials Needed

- *The Enormous Potato* by Aubrey Davis
- Word selection page (print needed amount from template)
- Silly story template page (print needed amount from template)
- Pencils

Directions

- Read *The Enormous Potato*.
- Distribute word selection page.
- Have children provide a word for each part of speech shown on each line of the word selection page. Review the meaning of noun, adverb & verb if needed.
- Distribute the silly story page. Have children fill it in using their word selections.
- Read the stories out loud.



Silly Story

By _____

There once was a _____ who had a _____. The
(noun #1) (noun #2)

_____ planted the _____ and it grew into a
(noun #1) (noun #2)

_____. It grew _____. It grew _____.
(noun #3) (adverb) (adverb)

_____ tried to pull it out of the ground but it wouldn't
(noun #1)

come. They called _____ to help. They pulled and
(noun #4)

pulled but it wouldn't come. Next they called _____ to
(noun #5)

help. They pulled again but it wouldn't come out of the

ground. So, they decided to call _____. They held on to
(noun #6)

each other and pulled and pulled but it still would not come



out of the ground. Finally, they called the _____ and
(noun #7)

pulled again. Out came the _____!!! They all got
(noun #3)

together and decided to _____ the _____. They
(verb) (noun #3)

put _____ and _____ on it and had a big feast.
(noun #8) (noun #9)

The End



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Silly Story Word Selection

Noun #1 _____

Noun #2 _____

Noun #3 _____

Adverb _____

Adverb _____

Noun #4 _____

Noun #5 _____

Noun #6 _____

Noun #7 _____

Verb _____

Noun #8 _____

Noun #9 _____



Making Words

Materials Needed

- Desired number of sets of eight p-o-t-a-t-o-e-s letter cards (print from template & cut out)
- Pencils
- Paper

Directions

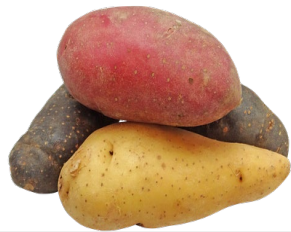
1. Divide children into small groups.
2. Distribute one set of letter cards to each group.
3. Have children spell p-o-t-a-t-o-e-s with the cards.
4. Ask children to rearrange the cards to create smaller words and write a list of all the words they can find.
5. Example: oat, tap, too, top, pat, at, to, toot, etc.



p



o



t



a



t



o



e



s

