

# Activities for Children's Books

## *Inch by Inch* by Leo Lionni

Early Childhood  
Education

Information  
Brief

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Reading children's picture books is enjoyable for teachers and children. Sharing books and adding additional activities can be used to enhance learning in a number of different ways. The activities described in this brief can be used to support learning in early literacy, math, and science.

*Inch by Inch* is about a small green worm who offers to measure a robin's tail to avoid being eaten. The little worm then meets other types of birds and measures them. Children can learn about different birds, their names, their sizes, where they live, and what they eat.

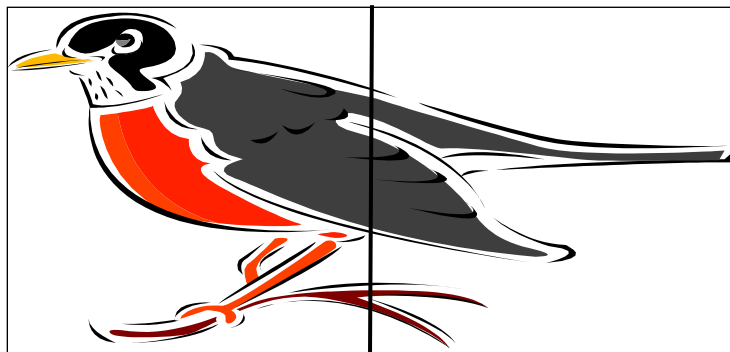
### Literacy Activities

- **Setting the stage (before reading):** Make cards with pictures and words of terms (vocabulary) for children to find in the story.
- **Alphabet Knowledge:** Ask children to find the bird that starts with a "T" [toucan], "F" [flamingo], and "N" [nightingale]. Can look through the book or include pictures of birds from the book. Then ask the question: "What letter does inchworm start with?"
- **Vocabulary:** Define the following words for the children or get them to tell what the words mean: emerald, twig, whole, measure, inch.
- **Story Concepts:** Ask comprehension questions about the story. Examples of questions you could ask:
  - Why did the inch worm start measuring the birds?
  - How did he trick the nightingale?
  - What other things might the inchworm measure where he lives? [could look at

book again – e.g., grass, leaves, flowers, other animals]

- **Rhyming:** Make up a song about worms or measuring – For example:
  - Inch, inch, inch your way
  - Measuring what you see
  - Measuring things long and short
  - Let's guess how long they'll be
    - Sung to the tune Row, Row, Row Your Boat
- **Phonemic Awareness – Blending:** Provide pictures of birds in the story & additional birds (e.g., robin, toucan, cardinal) on with the number of cells on the card as there are syllables in the word. Cut the cards apart so children can slide them together as they blend the words. Teacher note: make sure you check the syllables in each word you are working on blending (e.g., syllables in robin are rob-in).

[See picture example below]



## Math Activities

- **Measurement:**
  - Measuring: Make inchworms for the children to use to measure (these do not need to be exactly 1 inch, since young children start with non-standard units of measurement). The inchworms can be made from paper or green ribbon. Children can also make their own inchworms – in a length of their own choice. Children can measure items from the book – e.g., toucan’s beak, heron’s legs, or grass. Then they can measure objects around the classroom. They can guess how long each object might be and then confirm with their inchworms.
  - Measuring: other measuring tools could be used, including unifix cubes, or other measuring tools identified or made by the children. Teachers could encourage children to identify what else could be measured in the classroom or outdoors.
  - Comparing, predicting: The teacher could lead children to select items to compare which might be longer or shorter. The children could also make predictions before actually measuring. Predictions and comparisons could then be shared visually (graphs or diagrams).
- **Counting:** Count number of items measured in the book (e.g., number of birds, legs, beaks). Count inches of things they have measured in measurement activities.
- **Counting Songs:** Some early childhood songs can be found at:  
<http://www.songsforteaching.com/numbercounting.htm>

## Science Activities

- **Learning about birds in the book:** Children might want to learn more about the birds mentioned in the book – how big they are in real life, the habitats where they live, and what they typically eat (do all the birds in the book eat worms?).
  - This is a good opportunity to include outdoor learning. You can give children

binoculars to look at birds in their outdoor play space or during nature walks.

- Children can also look for nests, especially in the spring.
- **Learning about birds that live nearby:** Children might want to learn more about birds who live near them. They might want to learn more about bird’s natural homes or nests and how they are made. Teachers can:
  - Provide binoculars to watch birds outside.
  - Help build a feeder or bird house that children can watch.

## Resources:

- Ashbrook, P. (2003). *Science is simple: Over 250 activities for preschoolers*. Lewisville, NC: Gryphon House.
- Ritz, W. C. (Ed.). (2007). *A head start on science: Encouraging a sense of wonder*. Arlington, VA: NSTA Press, National Science Teachers Association.
- Vukelich, C., & Christie, J. (2004). *Building a foundation for preschool literacy: Effective instruction for children’s reading and writing development*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

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<https://www.gpidea.org/ecems-information-briefs>

