



Otis: Activity Guide



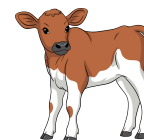
Read for the Record 2013: Otis

On October 3, 2013, millions of readers across all 50 states and multiple countries discovered why *Otis* by Loren Long earned its place as the eighth book selected for Jumpstart's Read for the Record campaign. The 2013 campaign brought together millions of readers of all ages from around the world. Together, we read one of the best books for preschoolers, *Otis*, the story of a sweet friendship between a little red tractor and a young calf on a farm, where acts of courage and unwavering friendship prove that even the smallest among us can be heroes when it matters most.



Welcome & Warm Up

Welcome & Warm Up (10 Minutes): Get ready for fun! Provide props in the play area that tie to the story—tractors, a barn, and farm animals like cows, pigs, chickens, and goats.



Reading Tips from Jumpstart: Bring the story to life!

You want to move at a good pace and avoid pausing on every page, but here are some suggestions for things you can say and do during reading to make it more engaging. You can use these during one-on-one reading, too!

Pictures Tell Stories:

Use the illustrations to talk about what you see, why characters act the way they do, and how they feel.

What's that Word?

When you come across new words, explain what they mean using simple language that kids can understand. (See "New Words" section).

Make it a conversation!

Listen carefully and let children do the talking.





Story Time

Story Time (10 Minutes): Who doesn't love story time? Gather the children around in a circle to read this week's book. Find a spot where all the children can sit together comfortably.

Prep & Set up:

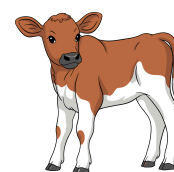
- **Practice First.** Read the book a few times before reading it to your playgroup. Practice using different voices and intonation to engage children in the story. Review New Words so you can effectively highlight them while you read.
- Can you see me? Invite children to sit in a horseshoe facing you so that they can each see you. Ask parents to sit behind their child. Hold the book so children can see the illustrations as you read.
- Enjoyment is the aim! It is likely the first time children will hear this story. Read at a comfortable pace, read with expression, and pause to comment on illustrations or introduce a new word. Don't worry about getting through the book efficiently; the goal is enjoyment.

New Words for Otis by Loren Long

(Child-friendly definitions to explain new words to children)

- **Farmhouse** - house where farmers live on a farm
- **Rusty** - covered with reddish-brown spots that happen when metal gets old or wet
- **Calf** - a young cow
- **Tractor** - a big machine that helps farmers plow fields or pull heavy things
- **Rumble** - a deep, rolling sound, like thunder or an engine
- **Lonely** - feeling sad because you are by yourself

Act it out! There are also words that can be demonstrated by action or with your voice to help children understand their meaning – jerk, snorted, bellowed, and sigh are just a few.



During the story:

- Begin reading the story right away.
- Read the story expressively to draw children in.
- Make comments to help children understand tone, events, and characters.
- Define the vocabulary words after reading each word in the story.
- Listen for children's comments or questions and respond briefly to confirm or clarify.
- Provide information to extend children's understanding.



Activity #1: Barn Mural

Overview: Otis's farm wouldn't be the same without a barn full of noises to lull the calf to sleep. There's a lot more to a barn than sleeping though, which children will find out with this activity.

Preparation: Medium-High

Materials

- A copy of Loren Long's Otis
- Large butcher paper
- Markers and/or crayons
- Cups or small containers for markers and crayons



Learning Focus: Children develop new vocabulary and comprehension as they learn about different animals and tools that can be found in a barn.



Activity

1. Introduce this activity by showing children a picture of Otis and the calf asleep in the stalls of the barn. Tell children that barns are useful places where farmers can store their tools (like tractors), and where animals can live.
2. Prepare for this activity by sketching a large barn onto the butcher paper. Plan enough space for the number of children participating in this activity to be able to draw something in the barn.
3. Draw individual stalls that children can fill with their own drawings of animals and tools. You might also draw the silo and windmill next to the barn as seen in the illustrations of Otis.
4. Help children learn about some other things that might be found in a barn (chickens, ducks, pigs, bales of hay, wagons, pitch forks, pails) Use the illustration of Otis and the calf asleep in the barn to name some of the objects.
5. Help children understand how print works by writing labels for the animals or tools that they draw on the mural. Encourage children to talk about and draw some of the animals or tools that you've just seen in Otis. Encourage children to put animals or tools in different stalls of the barn.
6. Conclude this activity by talking about the many different things that children have drawn in the barn. Remind children that the barn is like a big house for the animals and tools on the farm, and people don't usually live in barns.

Tips for Conversation

- Share some of your knowledge of barns with children. Have you visited a barn or read other books about barns? Share some of the things you know about how farmers use barns, and what animals and tools might be found in barns.



Activity #2: Friendship Pictures

Overview: Otis and the calf are good friends

who spend a lot of time together. Children can think about their own friends, draw pictures showing these friends and what they do together, and write words about their friendship on their drawings.

Preparation: Low

Materials

- A copy of Otis
- Paper
- Writing utensils (markers, colored pencils, crayons)



Learning Focus: Children develop vocabulary as they talk about their friendship drawings, as well as alphabet knowledge and understanding of meaning and use of print as they create artwork to depict friendship.

Activity

1. Show children the picture of Otis and the calf together at the end of the book. Remind children that Otis and the calf are very good friends, and they like to do many different things and spend time together.
2. Help children to find a piece of paper and a writing/drawing utensil. Prompt them to think about a special friend like Otis is to the calf. Engage children in a conversation about their own friends. Ask children to draw pictures of things they like to do with their friends. Refer back to parts of Otis and talk about the friendship between Otis and the calf.
3. Let children draw freely, commenting and encouraging them to talk about their work. Record what children say about the picture as a caption. For example, "I see you drew a picture of you and Sasha playing house. What are some words I can write about your picture?"
4. Conclude the activity by thanking children for sharing information about their friendships. Remind them that just like Otis and the calf, children can be special friends to one another.

Tips for Conversation

- Engage children in conversations about the activities Otis and the calf did together. For example: "Otis and the calf often sat beneath the apple tree. Most friends like to spend time together." "Otis and the calf played games of ring-around-the-rosy. Many friends like to play together."





Activity #3: Sink or Float



Overview: Otis's friend, the calf, sinks and gets stuck in Mud Pond. In this activity, children begin to learn about the concepts of weight by experimenting with various objects that will either sink or float in water.

Preparation: Low

Learning Focus: Children develop vocabulary and comprehension as they begin to understand that we can investigate and classify results. Children learn how to observe an experiment and predict results by talking about similarities and differences.



Materials

- A copy of Loren Long's Otis
- Large, shallow plastic container
- Water
- Tray for displaying objects to test
- Shoeboxes labeled "Floats" and "Sinks" to categorize materials
- Objects to test, for example: Small toy calf and tractor, paper clip, rock, sponge, paper, plastic bottle, pencils, marker cap, soda can



Activity

1. Introduce children to this activity by showing them the page where the calf sunk in Mud Pond. Remind children that Otis's friend, the calf, gets stuck in the mud and starts to sink. This activity asks children to think about what makes things sink or float.
2. Set up this activity by filling the large, shallow container with water. Place the objects that you will test on a tray. Set up the two shoeboxes with labels for categorizing.
3. Show children the container of water and talk about how some things in water might float or sink. Tell children that you will do an experiment together to test which objects float or sink in the water.
4. Read the signs on the shoeboxes (Floats or Sinks) and show children the tray of objects. Together, name each object you will test.



Activity #3: Sink or Float

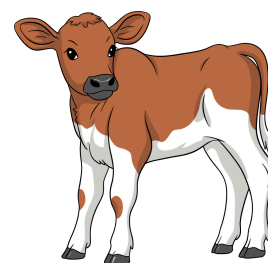


Activity (cont.)

1. Select an object that will float. Ask children to predict whether or not the object will sink or float.
2. Place the object in the water, and then talk about what happens. For example: “That plastic bottle is very light, and it floated. You thought it would float. You were right.”
3. Place the object in the correct shoebox.
4. Next, choose an object that will sink. Ask children to predict whether or not the object will sink.
5. Place the object in the water, and talk about what happens. Then place the object in the correct shoebox. For example: “It can be tricky to know which things will float or sink, but the rock is heavier than the plastic bottle. I think that is a clue that helps us to know whether it will float or sink.”
6. Continue to test different objects and categorize them according to Sinks or Floats. Talk with children about how the objects in the same box are alike. For example: “The objects in this box floated. Do you notice what is the same about them? What is different about the objects that sank?”
7. Conclude this activity by reminding children that Otis’s friend, the calf, was heavy and so she sank into Mud Pond. Tell children that if you could test a real calf in your experiment today, that calf would sink too. Heavy things sink and light things float.

Tips for Conversation

- When children choose objects to test, engage them in conversations about the materials and ask them to describe specific properties of the object.
- Encourage children to think of other objects that may float or sink – including animals or other objects. Use suggested vocabulary words during discussion in ways that make their meanings clear.
- As you test each object, use rich vocabulary and make connections to Otis when possible. For example: “In the book, the calf began sinking into the mud. The calf was too heavy and began sinking in and then couldn’t get out.”





Color Your Own Tractor

