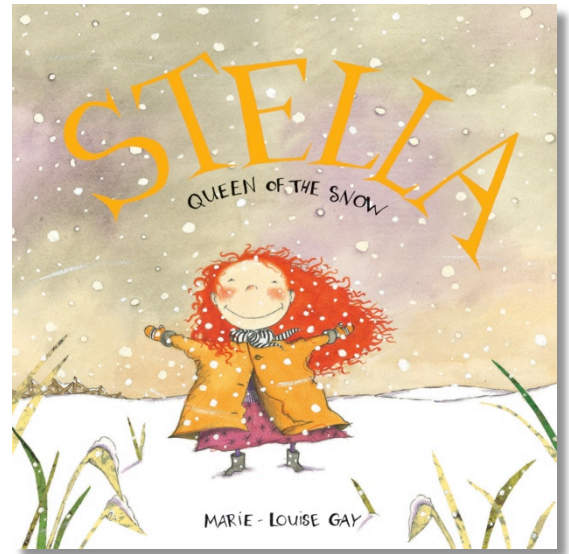


Stella, Queen of the Snow **Discussion Questions and Activities**

Winter has never been as magical as in *Stella, Queen of the Snow*, a story about a girl named Stella and her younger brother, Sam, exploring a familiar landscape transformed by a heavy snowfall. It is Sam's very first snowstorm and he has lots of questions. Older and bolder, Stella knows all the answers—though some are more true than others! Stella is a model older sibling. She and Sam do not always want to do the same things, but they get along and they find fun things to do together. As he explores his first snowy day, Sam follows Stella's lead from adventure to adventure.



There are many curriculum connections to be made from *Stella, Queen of the Snow*. Themes include: the importance of play, sibling and family relations, nature and the natural world, and the seasons (especially winter). This guide includes discussion questions, math exercises, science experiments, art projects, directed play activities and more. It can be used to introduce the story prior to seeing a performance and to continue the connections afterwards.

Discussion Questions

In this book, Sam asks his older sister many questions. Before reading, select several of Sam's questions and discuss them with the children. Record their answers. How do they compare to Stella's answers? Questions include:

Where does a snowman sleep?

What does a snowman eat?

Why does fog come out of your mouth when it's cold?

Where does snow come from?

Where does snow go in the summer?

How many snowflakes are there in a snowball?

Do dogs get cold?

Do birds get goosebumps?

Why is *Stella, Queen of the Snow* a good title for this book?

What is so special about this snowstorm for Sam? How does he react?

Stella, a young, inquisitive, imaginative girl, is the star of this book. Can you think of other books that feature girl characters? What about books that feature brothers and sisters?

Stella is a good older sister to her younger brother, Sam. How is she nice to Sam?

Stella likes to help her brother. What sorts of things do you like to do to help members of your family?

What It's All About

To reinforce comprehension skills, ask children to identify the characters, setting and plot of this story. Help children retell this story and go over the sequence of events. Ask them how the book begins. What happens next? How does it end? What was their favorite part of the story?

Fun with Stella and Sam

It is Sam's first snowstorm, and Stella wants to make sure her little brother has fun. She introduces Sam to many classic winter games—from skating to snowball fights. List all the things Stella shows Sam how to do. Which does he try, and which things does he not do with her? What reasons does he give? Have children experienced all of these activities? If so, how did they learn to do them? If not, which would they like to try? Are there any games they play which weren't mentioned that Sam might like?

Playing with Stella and Sam

Have each child imagine that Stella and Sam live in their neighborhood and they all play together in the snowstorm. Working with an adult, have the child write or dictate a single sentence of how they played in the snow (e.g., "Stella and Sam climbed the snowy tree with Josh"). This could be a scene from the book or a new one. Then have the child illustrate the scene. When they are all done, compile the pages and read this new picture book aloud, showing the group each picture.

If time and resources are available, use one of the following methods to give the drawings a "snowy" look:

Color the scene with wax crayons, being sure to press hard and cover thoroughly. Then paint with white paint. The paint won't stick to the crayons. Sprinkle clear glitter on the drawing while the paint is still wet for a glistening, snowy effect.

Or. . .

Working with an adult have children paint over their entire picture with a mixture of 450 ml (16 ounces) Epsom salts dissolved in 115 ml (4 ounces) of very hot water. As the picture dries, frosty crystals will appear.

Why Does. . .?

Stella has some very imaginative answers to Sam's questions. She tells him things like birds don't get cold because they wear snowboots and that polar bears eat snowflakes for breakfast. Have children come up with their own answers to those same questions. Have each child choose their favorite to illustrate. To embellish these drawings, use the techniques above to add a glittery, snowy feel.

Make a Snowman with Stella and Sam!

Have children draw the outline of a snowman on a large sheet of paper and then glue cotton balls to the paper to make a snowman. Features can be drawn or painted on, or cut out from construction paper or other craft materials. Sam and Stella discuss what sorts of "snowy" things a snowman would eat when they make their snowman. Have children illustrate a snowy thing for their snowman to eat. Then have them explain what they drew to the group. Display the final artwork.

Word Fog Shapes

"Hey!" said Sam. "Why is fog coming out of my mouth?"

"When it's this cold," said Stella, "your words freeze.

Every word has a different fog shape. See?"

Have children pick a wintery word and draw a "fog shape" to illustrate the word. Have children try to guess each other's words from their drawings.

Read-along, Play-along

Look through the book and have each child select a character or a prominent part of the scenery (the snowman, or a fort) and make a drawing of it. Attach the drawing to a craft stick. Read the story aloud and have students hold up their picture/puppet at the appropriate time.

Snowy Winter Word Wall

Create a snowy winter word wall — ask children to think of as many words as they can to describe winter and snow, and record them. Create word tracing worksheets for children to practice tracing these words or have children copy down words and then draw pictures to illustrate their words.

"What is Winter?" Mini-Book

Prepare mini-books for children to write and illustrate, titled "What is Winter?" On each page, print the sentence "Winter is..." Have children use words from their snowy winter word wall and other inspirations such as *Stella, Queen of the Snow* to complete the sentence. Have them illustrate each page, creating their own picture book about winter.

Shaving Cream Snow Writing

Have children practice writing their names or snowy winter words with their finger in shaving cream "snow" spread on their desks or tables.

Snowy Science and Math

Feed the Birds

Birds are constant background companions to Stella and Sam’s adventures in the snow. Help children identify familiar birds by looking at pictures or observing them in nature. Talk about what birds eat, and listen to their songs. Make bird feeders and other treats to feed Stella and Sam’s feathery friends.

- Hollow out an orange, tie with string to hang it and fill with seeds.
- Attach a string to a pine cone or bagel, cover in peanut butter, roll in bird seed and hang outside.
- Take old bread slices and cut out shapes with cookie cutters. Let them dry until they are hard enough to spread with peanut butter. Cover with seeds and hang outside.

Fact Checking

Read Sam’s questions and Stella’s answers and do a group research project to investigate the scientific answers for questions like “Do dogs get cold?” or “Do birds get goosebumps?”

Brrr. . . Reading a Thermometer

Discuss with children what a thermometer is, what it measures and how to read it. Let them examine one. Experiment with thermometers and cups filled with water at different temperatures to see what each type of water does to the thermometer. Place one outside and have children record the temperature each day. How does today’s temperature compare with yesterday’s?

Make a Snow Gauge

Take an empty clear plastic soda bottle and cut off the top half. Mark the outside in centimeters or inches with a permanent marker and place it outside where it can collect falling snow. Record the level of snow on the container. Discuss what snow is made of. Have children predict what will happen when the snow melts. Record their answers. Bring the container inside and let the snow melt. Record the level of the water in the container. Are children surprised at the difference?

Instant Snow Science

Non-Toxic Instant Snow can be purchased at teacher supply stores, arts and crafts stores or online. Have children take a small pinch of the “snow” and place it on a sheet of dark paper for observation — how does it look? How does it feel? Record their answers on a chart. Then, have children measure out a scoop of the powder and the proper amount of water. Before they mix it together, ask them to predict what will happen. Have children mix the powder with water in a cup—within seconds “snow” will begin to overflow the cup. Empty the snow onto a table. Have children look at it and explore it. Discuss what happened and how the snow feels and looks, then record their answers on the chart.

To view a video of instant snow: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3X9gEi0LfNc>

Idea from: <http://www.prekinders.com/instant-snow-science/>

Cold Bubble Fun

When the outdoor temperature drops below 0 °C (32 degrees °F), blow bubbles and watch them freeze on the wand. Before doing this activity ask children to predict what they think will happen to the bubbles. Afterwards, discuss their predictions and how they compared to what actually happened.

Winter Sorting Fun

Cut out winter shapes or pictures (snowmen, snowflakes, mittens, etc.) and give them to children along with a disposable muffin tin. Ask them to sort these winter images into different categories—type of object, color, etc. Can children think of any sorting categories of their own?

Shapes and Snowmen

Create a construction paper snowman kit to practice familiarity with shapes. Give students three white circles, a black square and a rectangle to make a hat, two long brown rectangles for arms, three yellow diamonds for buttons, two black circles for eyes, five tiny black circles to make a mouth, and one orange triangle for a nose. As children assemble their snowmen, review the different shapes and their characteristics.

Snow Songs and Finger Rhymes

Snow Happy

(to the tune of *If You're Happy and You Know It*)

If you're happy that it snowed, clap your hands.

If you're happy that it snowed, clap your hands.

Oh, it's fluffy, and it's white —

such a lovely, snowy sight!

If you're happy that it snowed, clap your hands.

Mittens on My Hands

(to the tune of *Wheels on the Bus*)

The mittens on my hands, keep me warm,
keep me warm, keep me warm.

The mittens on my hands, keep me warm.

All winter long!

Additional verses:

— The hat on my head.

— The coat on my body.

— The boots on my feet.

Little Snowman

I built a little snowman (form outline of snowman).

He had a carrot nose (point to nose).

Along came a bunny (move two fingers up and down).

and what do you suppose?

That hungry bunny (rub stomach).

looking for his lunch,

ate that snowman's nose, (point to nose).

nibble, nibble, crunch! (open and close hand).

Snowy Pokey

(to the tune of *Hokey Pokey*)

You put your right mitten in. You take your right mitten out,

You put your right mitten in and you shake it all about.

You do the snowy pokey and you turn yourself around.

That's what it's all about.

Other verses:

- You put your left mitten in.
- You put your scarf in.
- You put your right boot in.
- You put your left boot in.
- You put your hat in.
- You put your snow self in.

Boots, Jacket, Scarf and Hat

(to the tune of *Head and Shoulders*)

Boots, jacket, scarf and hat,
scarf and hat.

Boots, jacket, scarf and hat,
scarf and hat.

In wintertime we dress like that,
boots, jacket, scarf and hat,
scarf and hat.

Snowy Games

Indoor Ice Skating

Transform any room into an imaginary frozen pond or skating rink. Give each child two pieces of wax paper to stand on. Discuss that the paper is slippery and will work best if children slide their feet along the ground, keeping them firmly on the paper. Play some appropriate ice-skating music and encourage students to glide smoothly as they “skate” around the room. Alternatives to wax paper include paper plates or plastic grocery bags. Depending on the floor in the room you are using, one of these choices might work better than the others.

Winter Clothes

This game can be fun and make kids laugh while they practice their memory skills. Choose a volunteer to be the “snowman” that the other children will dress. Put scarf, mittens, a hat and other winter accessories on the snowman. Have children close their eyes. Then have another volunteer remove or change one clothing item. Encourage children to have fun and make silly changes, such as putting a hat on the snowman’s hand. Have the rest of the group open their eyes and try to figure out what is now different about the way their snowman is dressed.

What Should I Wear?

Collect dress-up clothes for various weather conditions: mittens, winter hats, snow boots, sunglasses, sun hats, etc. Ask for a volunteer to be “dressed up” as you describe the weather conditions. For example, “I woke up this morning and I looked out the window and it was COLD and SNOWY. What should I wear?” Ask children to call out suggestions and help dress the volunteer in an appropriate outfit. Every now and then throw in an inappropriate item – kids will find this hilarious!

Snowball Fight!

Stella and Sam have a snowball fight with their friends. Tell children that sometimes you don't need snow to have a snowball fight. Have children create 200 snowballs using newspaper and masking tape or crumpled-up paper. Start the game by dividing the group into two teams. Explain that this snowball fight is just for fun and they will not be throwing them at each other. Put each team on opposite sides of the room with the pile of snowballs in the middle. Each team throws as many snowballs as they can onto the other team's side. Time the game for one minute. When the minute is up have an adult assist each team in gathering and counting the snowballs on their side. The team with the least snowballs is the winner.

Snowstorm

Divide children into three groups – Snowballs, Snowflakes and Snow Angels. Tape a labeled paper shape on each child to indicate what group they are part of. Have the children sit in a circle on chairs or carpet squares. Choose one child to be Stella or Sam and have her/him stand in the center of the circle. Remove "Stella's" (or "Sam's") seat from the group so there is one seat less than the number of kids playing the game. Begin by having Stella (or Sam) call out one group name – such as "Snowballs." When a group hears their group name called, the children of that group run to a new chair in the circle, so everyone in that group changes seats. At the same time, Stella (or Sam) tries to get into one of the empty seats. Whoever does not get a seat is the new Stella (or Sam). If Stella (or Sam) calls "snowstorm" instead of a group name, all the players have to find new seats.

Pass the Snowball

Instead of playing "Hot Potato" play "Pass the Snowball." Have children sit in a circle wearing mittens. Read *Stella, Queen of the Snow* aloud while the children pass a styrofoam "snowball" around the circle. At a random time while reading, stop the story and yell "snowball!" The person holding the "snowball" is out. Continue playing until there is only one player left.

Additional Internet Resources

Some of the activities listed above were adapted from these treasure troves of winter-themed activities for young children. If you liked them, visit these sites for even more great ideas!

ChildFun.Com — Where Play and Learning Go Hand In Hand — Hundreds of pages of ideas, curriculum plans and activities.

<http://www.childfun.com/index.php/activity-themes/seasonal/267-snow-activities.htm>

DLTK's Crafts for Kids — features a variety of printable children's crafts, coloring pages and activities. <http://www.dltk-holidays.com/winter>

Gayle's Preschool Rainbow — Winter Theme Activities for Teachers of Young Children

<http://www.preschoolrainbow.org/preschool-winter.htm>

PreKinders.Com — PreK and Preschool Theme Ideas for Winter

<http://www.prekinders.com/winter-theme/>

Preschool-Plan-It.Com — Winter Themed Activities for Preschool

<http://www.preschool-plan-it.com/winter.html#MathAndManipulativesActivities>

PDF of winter fingerplays and rhymes.

<http://preschool.colonial.net/Teachers/DeFrancesco/fingerplaysPDFs/fingerplayswinter.pdf>

More fun winter songs and fingerplay ideas.

<http://www.oocities.org/providersnfriends/winter/w3.html>