

INTERACTIVE
STORYTIMES

..... *with*

Music, Movement,
and More



MOVE
PLAY
LEARN

The title is presented in three rows of large, bold, sans-serif letters. The word 'MOVE' is in the top row, 'PLAY' in the middle, and 'LEARN' in the bottom. The letters are white with a grey outline and a slight 3D effect. Surrounding the text are various icons: musical notes, a tambourine, and maracas. Small grey triangles are placed around the letters to suggest movement or sound.

ALYSSA JEWELL

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FOREWORD



Shake It, Alyssa, Cheki Moving and Shaking at Your Library

– JAMIE CAMPBELL NAIDOO, PhD –

DO YOU EVER HAVE ONE OF THOSE moments when you are bursting with pride and excitement?! That is exactly how I feel, holding this book. Not only is this a wonderful resource to help any librarian or early childhood educator interested in connecting children’s books with music, movement, and magical encounters, but it is also a road map to help you energize your storytimes, reading circles, or other early literacy programs. Librarian Alyssa Jewell provides a plethora of ideas, suggestions, and strategies that you can instantly put into practice. She combines her experience as a drama teacher and storyteller to suggest energetic literacy programs that will have your storytime crowd moving and shaking throughout the library.

Alyssa is a former student of mine at the University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies. In fall 2017 she completed a

directed study with me on “Moving and Grooving! Creating Movement and Music Storytimes for Children.” Throughout this intense study, Alyssa read professional literature, researched child development and early literacy best practices, and developed a strong foundation to support what she was already doing in her daily practices at her public library—a library where I worked years ago. She also started outlining storytime program plans and literacy tips that she could share with other children’s librarians in her library system. Alyssa’s intent was to take what she had successfully created at her library and empower other library workers in the greater Birmingham, Alabama, area.

Throughout her study with me, Alyssa devised a toolbox of best practices using her dynamic model of music and movement storytime. At the end of the semester, I read over her final project and instantly knew she had to share

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her successful strategies with a larger scope of librarians than those here in Birmingham. What she created was not a series of assignments on a particular topic; rather, she streamlined the beginnings of a professional book—this book—that could jumpstart early literacy programming with simple, inexpensive, tried-and-true ideas for use in libraries and early childhood settings of any size.

Movement and music programming is an interactive, dramatic, engaging, and supercharged way to approach the traditional storytime in libraries. It is grounded in child development and educational principles from theorists such as Howard Gardner, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky. At the same time, movement and music incorporates Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) early literacy skills and ECRR2's practices with R. Lynn Baker's *Domains of School Readiness*.¹ Infused in movement and music programs are opportunities for librarians to strengthen their storytimes to meet the Association for Library Service to Children's (ALSC) *Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries*. As Alyssa demonstrates, movement and music storytimes provide opportunities to address the learning and engagement styles of all children and create an avenue for outreach to diverse populations of children and their caregivers.

In addition to providing lists of recommended read-alouds, developmentally appropriate movement activities, and surefire songs, Alyssa also includes interviews with practitioners in the field who have implemented elements

of movement and music storytime or further elucidate how to engage in specific practices. At the same time, she provides detailed outlines of program plans for multiple age groups along with tips and suggestions ranging from crowd control to caregiver engagement. Collectively, Alyssa has created the necessary scaffolding to empower you, whatever your experience level with early literacy programming, to offer your own movement and music programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and mixed-age groups of young children.

Finally, Alyssa has culled an authoritative list of recommended print and digital professional resources that she regularly consults when developing her movement and music storytimes. These will be equally beneficial to you as you begin your journey. Are you ready to energize your storytimes with music, drama, and more? Are you ready to shake it, shake it? Let the dramatic music and movement adventure begin, and join me as I say—Shake it, Alyssa, cheki!²

NOTES

1. Association for Library Service to Children and Public Library Association. "Every Child Ready to Read," <http://everychildreadytoread.org>; R. Lynn Baker. *Counting Down to Kindergarten: A Complete Guide to Creating a School Readiness Program for Your Community* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2015).
2. This is a play on the Puerto Rican traditional rhyme "Shake It, Morena/Cheki Morena," which is a perfect example of a song you could use in a music and movement storytime.

INTRODUCTION



WHEN I FIRST BEGAN WORKING IN the children’s department at my library, part of my job was implementing all-ages weekly pajama storytime. I was given a template that looked like this:

- Welcome routine
- Five Silly Friends (behavior expectation rhyme)
- Read-aloud book
- “Filler” song or rhyme
- Flannelboard or puppet story
- “Filler” song or rhyme
- Flannelboard or puppet story
- Snack and a short movie

I thought to myself: perfect! I have experience as a drama teacher. Equipped with this tried-and-true storytime model, I will be ready to implement an awesome storytime. This template had worked for my predecessors and their predecessors before them, and for a while it worked for me too. But over time I began to notice problematic behavior patterns during storytime. Many young children would get squirmy right off the bat. I would barely get through the behavior expectations with my Five Silly Friends puppets before the children began doing exactly what the puppets said not to do: standing up, moving around, and talking (which is completely natural for children to do).

Another pattern I noticed was that the children were very interested in interacting with each other and with me, but because of the way the storytime was set up, their behavior came off as disruptive. There were very few built-in opportunities for them to engage with one another or connect with me. Additionally, half of the parents were usually disengaged—either on their phones, reading, or doing paperwork. Most of my early literacy asides were met with silence or polite smiles that all but said: *I came here so my kid and I would be entertained, not to have you tell me about early literacy. Carry on.* Although my supervisor gave me the freedom to tweak the storytime template, I thought: *Why fix something if it works for everyone else? It must be me that’s the problem.*

It never occurred to me to change things up until one evening at storytime I had an “aha moment.” It was springtime and the kids were being particularly disruptive. Many of the parents were disengaged and not doing anything about their children’s behavior. The drama teacher in me came out. I stopped in the middle of the read-aloud and said, “All right, friends! Everybody up! We’re going to do a movement activity called *Countdown*.” This is a movement activity in which you shake your right hand eight times and count to eight, then do the same thing with your left hand, right foot, left foot, and booty, and then

repeat with seven, six, five, four, three, two, and finally one, at which point everyone is flailing and laughing. I used to do it as a warm-up in theater class. The children and parents loved it. When we started the read-aloud after *Countdown*, they were like a different group—focused and engaged. I decided to incorporate more interactive activities the next week, and the next, and the next until my model had drastically evolved.

I began to add more songs with movement and put so much emphasis on the so-called “fillers” that they became just as exciting as the stories themselves. I changed my approach to material selection and began looking for books and songs with interactive elements so the kids and parents could participate. In doing all of this, I realized the problematic patterns I previously saw were not problems with the children’s or parents’ behaviors, but with the storytime model itself.

The following year, I developed a music and movement storytime called *Movers & Shakers*. I honed my techniques week after week and was showered with positive feedback from parents. “This is so cool and different,” they’d say. “My son learned something and now he won’t stop talking about it,” or, “I cannot believe my daughter was so engaged! She never lasts through the whole storytime!” Later, I had the opportunity to work with Dr. Jamie Campbell Naidoo in a directed study where I researched the science behind why movement, music and interactive elements work so well in storytime. Throughout this study, I also expanded my knowledge of books, music, movement activities and best practices, talked to experts in the field, and refined my approaches. That is how I have come to love music and movement storytime and why I want to share it with you.

Why We Do Storytime the Way We Do

My personal experience with storytime illustrates how adults often come up with ways of

doing things that work for us, but may not necessarily work best for children. We get used to doing things a certain way and never step back to ask ourselves, *why are we doing it like this?* At its core, this book is designed to make you think about why you do storytime the way you do.

Ask yourself, do you do storytime a certain way because that’s the way it has always been done at your library? Is it because that’s the way you were taught to do storytime? Is it because that’s the way you are comfortable doing storytime? Now take a step back and think about storytime from a child’s perspective. Put yourself in the shoes of a calm, introspective child, a bouncing-off-the-walls child, and every kind of child in between. Is the design of your storytime the most effective way of igniting the joy of learning for *all* of these children? Lastly, think about storytime from the perspective of parents or caregivers. They just hauled their child all the way to *your* library to attend *your* storytime program. I will tell you, as a new mom, learning how to get yourself and your child(ren) clean, dressed, fed, in the car, transported, parked, and inside your destination on time is like an Olympic sport in and of itself. So, consider your grown ups too. Are they tired? Are they excited? Are they distracted? How many children do they have in tow? Are they getting what they hoped to get out of storytime? Adults are crucial to your storytime and their experiences matter. After all, children don’t drive themselves to the library.

I find reflecting on these kinds of questions to be very useful when designing, planning, and executing storytime. It helps me take a user-centered approach in terms of both children and their caregivers. Upon reflecting on these questions myself, I came to the conclusion that interactive storytimes are better for patrons than most traditional storytime models largely because interactive storytimes cater to the ways in which children learn and interact with new information. Rather than asking children to behave like apprentice adults by sitting quietly for the duration of the program, I design the

storytime around children’s natural impulses to move, sing, talk, and play.

How to Use This Book

In this book, I will talk about why interactive storytimes with music, movement, and more work so well and provide you with the resources you need to make them happen. That being said, it is important to remember that every library is different. What works best for my library may not be the best approach for yours. In that spirit, I encourage you to use this book in whatever way works best for you and the people you serve. You may decide to try things exactly how I suggest doing them. You may also decide to tweak or customize elements, or you may take ideas here and there and apply them using your own unique approach.

This book will be useful for people in lots of different settings and with different levels of experience. You may be a seasoned storyteller, or you may never have done a storytime before. Whatever your level of experience, this book will be beneficial. Even if you do not work in a library setting, the principles and resources in this book can still be applied in many different pedagogical settings. I mostly address people who do storytime in public libraries or school libraries—but there are lots of other folks who will get something out of it too, including:

- public library children’s department directors
- public library directors
- preschool educators and administrators
- elementary school educators and administrators
- early literacy specialists
- youth or family outreach specialists
- nonprofit programmers and administrators
- children’s museum programmers, and administrators
- camp programmers, instructors, and administrators
- administrators or teachers at music, theater, or dance centers for children
- professors and students in the library and information science, education, and arts education fields

Organization of the Book

This book is organized in two parts. Part I introduces the benefits of music and movement storytime and explains how to design, lead, and implement it. Part II offers practical resource materials, including ready-to-use storytime plans for different age groups and lists of recommended resources. I recommend starting at the beginning of this book and going from there, but there are other approaches you can take:

- If you already have lots of classroom or storytelling experience and are well-versed in early childhood development and using movement, music, and dramatic play as pedagogical tools, then Part II: Resource Materials will be of most interest to you. I also highly recommend checking out the five interviews peppered throughout Part I of the book because there are many great nuggets from very knowledgeable people in multiple disciplines.
- If you are already in the process of creating your own music and movement storytimes and are looking for books and songs to use, Recommended Resources will be of particular interest to you. The Subject/Theme Index at the end of the book is also helpful for finding materials that fit popular themes. I also recommend perusing chapter 4: Material Selection for tips on choosing the best materials for your program and to see my top ten lists of books and music. These chapters will also be helpful if you are building your interactive book or music collection.
- If you are an administrator looking for research-based ammunition to get funding


or support for interactive storytimes or arts-integration programming, I suggest focusing on chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Special Features

There are several special features in this book to be aware of:

- **Interviews:** There are five interviews found throughout Part I. I spoke with professionals who specialize in storytimes for babies and preschoolers, music making with children and families, yoga storytime, and drama education. I knew there were elements of music and movement storytime that they could expand on to enrich this book. Their voices are extremely valuable and add a lot to the conversation. I highly recommend checking them out.
- **Tables:** Rather than presenting complex information to you in long blocks of text, I have distilled most of it down into several tables found throughout Part I. The goal of the tables is to make the information quick and easy for you to absorb. If you want to know more about the information found in a table, refer to the notes at the end of the corresponding chapter for professional and academic sources.
- **Storytime Plans:** Part II includes twenty ready-to-use storytime plans with stories, songs, and movement activities. I have included lyrics for all of the songs. If you are using prerecorded music, it is often not necessary to memorize the lyrics—but I still included them for reference purposes. Most of the songs used in the storytime plans incorporate some kind of movement. Sometimes the movements are already built into the lyrics. Other songs lend themselves very well to movement but don't offer any obvious directions in the lyrics. I have included some

of my own movement suggestions for these songs and encourage you to come up with whatever movements feel natural to you and your patrons.

- **YouTube Icons:** Within the storytime plans in Part II, you will find YouTube icons that look like this: . This icon indicates that there is a YouTube video for a song worth checking out. Head on over to YouTube and search for the corresponding artist or song title and it should pop right up. Many of these videos serve as ready-made tutorials of how you can incorporate movements with the songs. Most of them are so well produced that you may want to consider playing them on a large screen during storytime, if that option is appropriate for your age group and space.
- **Resource Lists:** The back of the book includes resource lists as well as a Subject/Theme Index, which is a practical tool for people who have a storytime theme and are looking for interactive materials to fit that theme, or vice versa. There are also resource lists in chapter 4 that highlight some of my all-time favorite books and music for movement and music storytime.

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