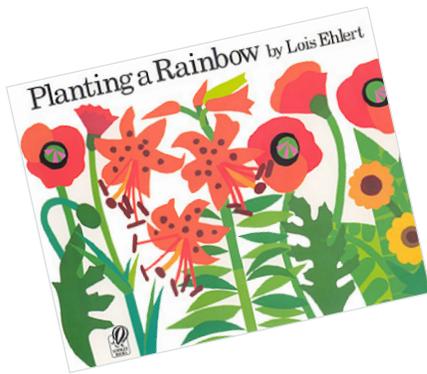


Reading with children can improve their language, literacy, and social-emotional skills, increasing their knowledge of the world around them. With the right book choices, reading can introduce children to healthy eating habits too!



PLANTING A RAINBOW

by Lois Ehlert

What It's All About

A child and his or her mother plant many flowers in their garden. They plant bulbs, start some flowers from seed, and buy seedlings of other more delicate flowers. When the garden grows and blossoms they have flowers of every color to enjoy. This story includes the unique names of many different kinds of flowers that children can begin to learn.



Discover a World of Words

Throughout the story, introduce new vocabulary words using gestures, tone of voice, pointing to illustrations, or providing brief explanations. Examples include:



- *Rainbow*: a collection of many colors
- *Bulb*: an underground bud of some plants such as tulips
- *Seedlings*: a very young plant
- *Sow*: to plant seeds

Dig into the Story

Develop children's comprehension of the story by discussing higher-level information (e.g., link characters' feelings to their actions and/or events in the story, predict what might happen, summarize chunks of text). Use prompts throughout the story, such as:

- *The family in the story plants bulbs in the fall because bulb plants need to winter over in the ground. They will grow back every year.*
- *Some seeds can be started outside in the soil, and others are so delicate that they need to be started in a greenhouse. These young plants are called "seedlings."*
- *Why does the family pick the flowers and bring them home in the summer?*

Make Connections Beyond the Book

After reading the story, make connections to an aspect of the child's real life by:

- Discussing the flowers growing in your neighborhood or garden. How many colors do you see?
- Using the internet to look up photographs of some of the flowers mentioned in the book. Tell children the names of these flowers, and help them learn which flowers grow from bulbs and which grow from seeds.

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Some definitions taken from Biemiller, A. (2010). *Words worth teaching: Closing the vocabulary gap.*

Jumpstart

Jumpstart is a national early education organization working toward the day every child in America enters kindergarten prepared to succeed. Learn more at jstart.org.

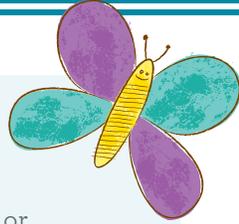
Together Time Activity

CHART YOUR OWN RAINBOW GARDEN: Invite children to create a chart, drawing or collage of their own rainbow garden with every color represented. Then make a real-life salad with the veggies they choose.

- 1 Gather up any art materials you would like to use: crayons, markers, paints, colored pencils, colored paper, scissors, glue, tape, etc.
- 2 Chart the veggies. On a plain sheet of paper, write down all the colors of the rainbow across the top of the page to make columns. Ask your child to think of as many vegetables as possible and write them down in each color column. (Adults can write down the names for pre-readers, but encourage children to think of the vegetables on their own).
- 3 Make the garden and “plant” the veggies. This can be as simple as drawing and coloring with crayons, or for older children it may be as elaborate as charting out a realistic garden plot using colored pencils and graph paper. To make it a collage project, cut veggies out of colored paper and glue or tape them to a garden background. Encourage kids to get creative with their designs.
- 4 Now, choose favorite veggies from the list and make a rainbow salad together. Ask your child to pick at least one vegetable of each color. Visit the store to buy what you need, then spend time together in the kitchen rinsing and cutting the raw veggies to make an easy, fresh salad to share with your child.



Talking Points



- Talk about how to draw or represent each vegetable. Which ones grow on stalks, on vines, underground, etc? If you're not sure, look them up online.
- Discuss why it's important to eat a rainbow of different foods. Explain that each color can provide different nutrients your body needs, so it's good to eat a rainbow each day or even at each meal whenever you can.
- Talk about how many vegetable servings a person should eat each day. Depending on age, children should get anywhere from 1-3 cups daily (at least). Visit www.choosemyplate.gov for specific, age-based recommendations.
- Talk about the salad while you eat it. Ask your child what they think about each ingredient? Talk about the different flavors and textures. Talk about other ways you could eat these same ingredients raw or cooked.