

The Spooky Old Tree  
by Jan and Stan Berenstain

Suggested grade and level: Pre-K and lower elementary

Topic: spooky things

Skill builders: one to one correspondence up to three, s clusters, spatial concepts, repetitive sentences and questions, feelings, spatial concepts. Vocabulary: spooky, dare, shivers, twisty, giant, knight, axe, hall, climb, through, into, without, safe. Literacy skill of prediction.

Synopsis: three bears set off on an adventure, explore a spooky tree that looks a lot like a monster. They encounter many things, a scary looking hall, several knights with axes, hair-raising accidents. Each encounters a specific challenge which cause them to shiver, with scary reaction. The last encounter is with a sleeping bear they wake up, who is decidedly unhappy with being disturbed and chases them. How do they get out of there? By getting home where it is safe.

Method: capture the children's interest by reciting the title in an elongated, wavery voice. (Like a ghost moaning.) Pause for answer whenever the question, "Do they dare....?" Point out each way the tree looks like a monster. Knots in the wood look like evil eyes, the branches resemble arms which want to capture the bears, and the opening looks an awful like a mouth.

Extended activities: have an adult or child act like they are sleeping. Act out "climbing" over the sleeping bear and have the "sleeping bear" roar and chase. (You will need some extra supervision to make sure they don't carry this too far.) Brainstorm other spooky things. Talk about times you were scared or things that you find esp. scary. Any art project about making spider webs would be appropriate.

On a play ground jungle gym/slide, children could pretend to go up the ladder, through a floor, down a slide, etc.

by Cheryll Nelson Union Grove, Wisconsin