**Owl Babies by Martin Waddell and Patrick Benson** (Walker Books)

Separation is one of the big traumas of childhood. In this utterly simple yet deeply moving picture book all that happens is that three owlets are left alone whilst their mother goes off into the night to hunt for food. The older ones think and reason (‘Owls think a lot’) - but Bill, the youngest can only cry ‘I want my mummy!’ Patrick Benson’s dark and feathery pictures are as touching and unfussy as Martin Waddell’s text.

**Overall learning aims of this teaching sequence.**
- To engage children with a story with which they will empathise
- To explore, develop and sustain ideas through talk
- To broaden experiences of the world and relate to personal experiences
- To explore and express thoughts and feelings associated with separation, fear and belonging
- To explore and interpret stories through creative activity including play, art, drama and drawing
- To explore and develop strategies to support early reading of whole words and printed texts
- To mark make and write for meaning and purpose in a variety of narrative and non-narrative forms

**This teaching sequence is designed for a Nursery or Reception Class**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview of this teaching sequence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This teaching sequence is approximately 3 weeks long if spread out over a series of sessions. It is designed to encourage conversation, visual literacy and imaginative role-play as the story unfolds. The book offers scope for exploring the themes of separation, fear and sibling relationships through this touching story of an owl family. It also explores fear of the dark and the theme of ‘night’ to which the author regularly returns. The illuminated illustrations of the owls enhance the mood of the story, creating a sense of anticipation. It is a thought provoking and memorable read in which the children enjoy chiming in and tuning in to the patterned language and rhythm of story. The sequence offers plentiful and engaging opportunities for children to revisit, retell and re-enact the story, and respond in meaningful ways.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Teaching Approaches:</th>
<th>Writing Outcomes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responding to illustration</td>
<td>Descriptive annotations on artwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Talk ‘Tell Me’</td>
<td>Free verse poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualising</td>
<td>Wanted Poster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing and Annotating</td>
<td>Letter to Mummy Owl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry and language Play</td>
<td>Notes of reassurance or advice to the baby owls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Aloud</td>
<td>Questions for hot-seating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama and role-play – Hot-seating and Freeze-Frame</td>
<td>Speech and thought bubbles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared writing</td>
<td>Labels and captions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing in role</td>
<td>Family Tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>Shrine Box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisiting and retelling</td>
<td>Information Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book-based game</td>
<td>Bookmaking and Publishing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Teaching Sessions

Before beginning this teaching sequence:

- Due to the sensitive themes within the text, it may be necessary to support vulnerable children on a more personal level with their key person, or other trusted adult. Consider the children’s family contexts before exploring the book.
- Make a display of books in the classroom that involve families of all kinds, sensitive to the experiences of the children:
  - *So Much* by Trish Cooke and Helen Oxenbury (Walker Books)
  - *The Large Family* series by Jill Murphy (Walker Books)
  - Family stories by Anthony Browne such as *My Dad, My Mum, My Brother* (Corgi)
- Prepare a class reading journal by sewing or stapling together sugar paper to collect children’s responses or examples of their work throughout the unit. You may also wish to prepare a black background for the working wall, gradually illuminating it with the children’s mark making, artwork, ideas and responses to the book.

Book Talk ‘Tell me’—Responding to an illustration

- Set the scene by introducing the story in a darkened classroom; lights off, blinds down. You could pretend that the lights have stopped working overnight and have the site manager to visit the class and explain the situation to the children. Hand out torches or electric candles for the children to share. Comfort the children; make the atmosphere exciting yet relaxed. If children are overly worried, place a soft table lamp by them. You could prepare for this day by asking the children to bring in a comforter from home that they could hold.
- Select an illustration of the owls from the book (page 3 or 5 would be appropriate). Ensure the text is concealed then make copies and hand them out for the children to look at with their partner under torchlight. Allow the children time to look and respond to what they can see. What do they think is happening?
- Encourage the children to draw on their own experiences, drawing on some of the prompts:
  - What do you notice in the picture?
  - Who are the owls? What are the owls doing? How are the owls feeling?
  - What do you think is happening?
  - Does it remind you of anything you have seen before?
  - Where is this? How can you tell? What might you hear if you were there?
  - What do the owls think of the dark? (Discuss how does this compare to the children’s own thoughts and feelings about the dark?)
  - Do you have any questions?
- Scribe ideas on the working wall or in the shared journal around a copy of the illustration.
- Elicit ideas and ask the children to draw their ideas; the possible events that might unfold in the book, who it might involve, etc.
- Take the opportunity in this session to clarify, consolidate and extend the children’s language and vocabulary, making a note of any words or phrases that can be introduced throughout the teaching sequence during focused sessions.
- Allow the children time to explore their learning environment in the dark with their torches.
- Provide the children with an opportunity to explore shadow puppets on an overhead projector or similar.
- Read aloud a range of books that involve owls or that enable the children to explore bedtime anxieties and fears of the dark:
  - *Can’t You Sleep Little Bear*? by Martin Waddell and Barbara Firth (Walker Books)
  - *The Park in the Dark* by Martin Waddell and Barbara Firth (Walker Books)
  - *The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark* by Jill Tomlinson and Paul Howard (Egmont)
  - *The Owl and the Pussy Cat* by Edward Lear and Ian Beck (Corgi)
  - *The Dark* by Lemony Snicket and Jon Klassen (Orchard)
  - *Orion and the Dark* by Emma Yarlett (Templar)

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### Exploring vocabulary and language – Visualising a Setting and Poetry

*Drawing story settings prompts children to imagine what a scene looks like, or visualise it from a particular viewpoint. Like drama, it enables children to enter the world of the story and provides support for writing.*

- Continue to create experiences for the children where they can explore the dark. Elicit words and phrases related to how it makes them feel or what they observe. Encourage sensory description.
- Take them to the woods or have them listen to a sound clip of a woodland setting at night, again eliciting further detail in their description.
- The children could create artwork using charcoal and dark coloured pastels to depict the atmosphere of the dark woods the owls have woken up to. Or they could start with the dark paper and illuminate it with lighter coloured pastels for the trees and leaves, moonlight and stars.
- Have the children or adults annotate their artwork with descriptions about the dark woodland setting and their feeling about the dark. Display the children’s artwork and read the annotations aloud to the children.
- Have the children go on a gallery walk, inviting them to talk about artwork or description they find particularly effective or memorable.
- Working with a small group, provide dark coloured strips of paper to each child and ask them to write or have scribed a word or phrase that they feel best describes the dark woodland, the baby owls’ feelings or their own emotional responses to the dark. Support the group to collaborate to arrange the strips into an order that creates a free verse poem.
- Rehearse reading aloud and performing the poem, modelling to the children how they can use intonation, sound effects and movement to evoke the intended atmosphere and associated feelings.
- Perform the poem in front of a wider audience, commenting on effective use of language, vocabulary and performance.

### Reading aloud and Freeze-Frame and Thought Tracking – Exploring viewpoint and feelings around separation

*Freeze-frames are still images or tableaux. They can be used to enable groups of children to examine a key event or situation from a story and decide in detail how it could be represented. When presenting the freeze-frame, one of the group could act as a commentator to talk through what is happening in their version of the scene, or individual characters can be asked to speak their thoughts out loud.*

- Revisit the illustration in the class journal and the children’s ideas about what is happening.
- Begin to read aloud the story.
- On the second page encourage the children to predict where they think the mother owl has gone and why. Scribe the responses into the class journal around a picture of the mother owl.
- Ask the children to think about any times they have lost their mum or dad when out and about. How did it make them feel? Give the children time to reflect on this.
- As you read on, have woodland sound effects playing in the background, such as: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndL6m5vHVhw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndL6m5vHVhw)
- Small groups of five or six children could be supported in re-enacting then freezing-framing the scene. When you tap them on the shoulder each child could voice their character’s thoughts in role. These could be scribed on thought bubbles and displayed around the image. Scribe all of these words in one particular colour to compare later when mother owl returns.
- Begin to scribe how the children are feeling about the separation, and how they think the owls are feeling. Make a separate list of feelings for the baby owls (Sarah, Percy and Bill) and the children within the setting.
- Continue reading the story up until the stage where the owls wish for their mother to return. How have the owls differed in their reactions to mother owl not being in the nest? Elicit from the children that the older siblings are trying to reason about her disappearance whereas Bill just repeats that he wants his mummy.
  - *Is it just Bill that wants his mummy?*
  - *Why are his older brother and sister not saying this too? What are they thinking?*
- Freeze-frame and thought track further to enable the children to better grasp the idea that you could be thinking something but not saying it aloud.
- Complete the next three sessions, before returning to read the rest of the story.
Expanding vocabulary and Shared Writing – Wanted Poster

Shared writing is one of the most important ways a teacher can show children how writing works and what it’s like to be a writer. Acting as scribe, the teacher works with a small or large group of children to create a text together, enabling them to concentrate on their ideas and composition. Teacher and children work as active partners, talking together to share ideas and while the teacher guides the children through all the decisions that writers need to make and helps them shape their thoughts on paper. Shared writing gives children a model for their own independent writing and can introduce them to unfamiliar genre or style of writing. Children can then present their written work in a range of literary outcomes such as a poster, big book or poem for everyone to enjoy.

- Having read the story to the part where the mother owl flies off, tell the children that we might create wanted posters that could be put up around the setting, encouraging her to be found and return to her babies.
- Having posters displayed engages other children and adults in the setting and stimulates purposeful conversation about who the owl is and where she has gone. It will also allow the children to interpret the story in their own words and retell it.
- Share writing the content of the class poster; explicitly modelling and taking the burden of the technical aspects of writing whilst eliciting the children’s ideas in composing. Have the children suggest titles for the poster, such as ‘Wanted! Mummy Owl’ or ‘Reward for finding Mummy Owl’ that will attract the attention of readers.
- Consider how the poster is to be laid out to further attract attention. What size paper could we use? You could even use glow in the dark paint to attract nocturnal animals. Provide materials from which the children can choose when creating their own poster.
- Have the children display their posters for their intended audience and encourage children to read those they find around the setting, supporting them to draw on their knowledge of the story, characters and dialogue as they discuss Mummy Owl being away and make their predictions. Encourage them to talk about particularly effective aspects of the posters that they see in attracting attention and in persuading Mummy Owl to return.

Debate, Discussion and Critical Thinking – Encouraging the owl to come back

- Ask the children how else they could encourage Mummy Owl to return to her babies and scribe their suggestions in the class journal.
- Provide the children with the resources to put their ideas into practice.
- Encourage the children to explore the outdoor area, making owl nests and concocting owl food in a mud kitchen that might entice her to return.

Shared Writing – Imploring letter to Mummy Owl

- Reread and revisit the first two pages, exploring the children’s ideas about how the baby owls are feeling.
- As a group or class, share writing a letter to the mother owl asking her to return to her babies. Revisit the notes and thought bubbles in the class journal to help explain to her how her babies are feeling.
- Share writing the content of the letter. Support the children in extending their ideas and provide Mummy Owl with the detail she needs to return swiftly, e.g. ‘Your owl babies are squawking and squeaking. They are scared of the silence.’ With the children, consider the best use of language that conveys the urgency of the situation and will elicit a speedy response.
- Post the letter in the mail box with the children and await a response.

Exploring and stimulating ideas and predictions

- Prior to this session, prepare some clues in the classroom which suggest that the mother owl has visited overnight, e.g.:
  - Place leaves and sticks all over the classroom
  - Leave a pile of bird food in a corner
  - Add a spillage of water (perhaps by the water table)
  - Leave some natural brown and white feathers
- Encourage the children to investigate the clues and predict who has visited overnight using magnifying glasses.
mirrors, clipboards, etc.

- Take photographs of the children and scribe their reactions on speech bubbles. The children could record their hypotheses using digital equipment.

Reading Aloud, Drama, Freeze-Frame and Thought Tracking

- Ask the children to predict whether they think the mother owl will return to her babies and why they think that. Scribe their ideas in the journal.
- Read the story aloud from the beginning until the end, allowing the children plenty of time to respond to it.
- Look at the illustration of the mother owl returning. Ask the children how they think Sarah, Percy and Bill feel at this point.
- Small groups of five or six children could be supported in re-enacting then freeze-framing the scene. When you tap them on the shoulder each child could voice their character’s thoughts in role. These could be scribed on thought bubbles and displayed around the image in a different colour from the thought bubbles belonging to the owls when their mum had left them.
- Scribe feelings words in the class journal next to the initial feelings, in a different colour. Compare the differences in the words.
- You might like to develop the language further, describing various emotions by tracking the baby owls’ emotional journey throughout the book. You could display a simple sequence of key illustrations from the book on the wall and support the children to annotate each one with the thoughts and feelings of the baby owls. Freeze-Framing and Thought Tracking each scene will enable the children to better step inside the character. You could add photographs and speech bubbles to the sequence of illustrations.
- Spend time and take opportunities to clarify, recast and enrich the children’s lexicon of emotions in a range of situations, personal and fictional.

Drama, exploring character and composing questions – Hot-Seating Sarah Owl

In hot-seating, somebody role-plays a central character from a poem or story and is interviewed by the other children. This activity involves children closely examining a character’s motivation and responses. Before the hot-seating, they need to discuss what it is they want to know and identify questions they want answering. If children have no experience of hot-seating, the teachers may initially need to take the role.

- You could do this at several points in the story to see the differences in the children’s responses.
- Ask the children what they would like to ask members of the owl family if they were able to.
- If the children could speak to Sarah, what questions would they ask her? Record the children’s responses and write a list of class questions. Ask the children to discuss questions they would like to ask, scribing them in the class journal, after modelling the first few yourself, such as:
  - How did you feel when your mum flew off?
  - Does the dark scare you? Why? Why not?
  - How do you think your brothers felt?
  - How did you keep calm?
  - What is your favourite thing about your mum?
- Extend or recast closed questioning to draw out more information from Sarah when she visits.
- Invite ‘Sarah’ in to the classroom so that the children can ask her how it felt to wake up to no mummy. An adult could wear a simple signifier, such as a feathered owl mask or be seated on a chair that has been decorated nest-like with twigs, feathers and leaves.
- Have ‘Sarah’ answer the questions posed and retell the story from her point of view, using the illustrations as prompts.
- Afterwards, confident children might like to sit in the hot-seat and adopt the character of Sarah, or her brother owls, answering in role questions posed by their classmates.
- You might hot-seat the role of the mother owl, responding to questions the children may have, such as:
  - Why did you fly off? Why didn’t you wait until they had woken up first?
  - Did you know how scared the baby owls were? Why didn’t this stop you leaving?
- Why didn’t you leave somebody to look after the baby owls? Why would you leave babies alone?
- Where is Daddy owl?

Shared Reading – Thank You note from Mummy Owl – Debate and discussion

- Prior to this session, prepare a little note from Mummy Owl, thanking the children for their letter and all the things that they did to persuade her to come back. However, have her explain her absence by also firmly reminding them that she has to look for food and that they ‘must have known she would come back, she always comes back’.
- Have a member of the admin team rush in with the letter from mother owl. Read aloud or share reading the letter and talk about her reasons for leaving. Revisit the hot-seating activity and her final words about always coming back.
- Discuss the story further in small groups, with children sharing their own responses the owlets’ predicament and own experiences of being afraid, worried or lost.
- Ask the children if they think that mummy owl should have stayed in the nest, cuddling up to her baby owls. Put forward the point of view that it was her responsibility to find them food to eat even if that meant leaving them. What would happen if she stayed in the nest with her baby owls all the time?
- Encourage the children to consider her point of view and translate this to their own experiences:
  - How does it feel when a parent leaves you? When does this happen?
  - Why does a parent leave you? Would they leave you all alone?
  - How do you feel when they leave you? What do you do? What do they say to you?
  - What happens when they come back? If you are cross or upset, what do they say to you?
- You might want to support the children further in understanding parental responsibilities and viewpoint through role-play in the home corner. You could create role-play ‘work places’ that are recognisable in the children’s own families. You could invite parents in to talk about what their responsibilities are and how it makes them feel.
- There is much scope for discussing what babies need to grow up healthily and safely and what parents need to do in caring for babies and young children. The children might explore the life of owls and other birds in their research, enabling them to compare the similarities and differences in what a human parent provides for their young.
- You could invite a parent in with a baby sibling so that the children could learn about what human babies need. This is particularly effective if the baby becomes well known to the children and visits regularly, allowing the children to form relationships, develop empathy and watch a younger child grow and develop.

Exploring viewpoint - Debate and discussion - Circle time

There is much scope for the children to relate the owlets’ experience to those in their own lives. It may be beneficial to group the children with their Key Person when asking children to share their feelings and listen to those of others. This kind of ‘Golden’ or ‘Island’ time serves to build confidence in children as they become increasingly familiar with the Key Person adult but also develop a group identity with their group. Smaller groups may give less confident children more opportunity to share ideas and opinions and enable wider discussion and debate. Young children may feel cross upset or even traumatised by separation from their parent and it is important they have opportunity to express their feelings and understand these events.

- Before discussing family members and structures, ensure you have liaised with parents around any recent changes in circumstances. Deal with sensitivity so that all children feel their circumstances are understood and valued. Provide the children with a comfortable, secure environment in which they feel confident to talk and listen.
- Start by modelling why you love your mum, dad or other significant parent figure: “I love my daddy because…”
- Go round the circle and ask the children to say why they love somebody significant to them. Each child can hold a soft owl to show it is their turn to speak while the others listen attentively.
- Another adult could record the children’s responses in the class journal.
- Extend the session by asking the children to think about how it feels to be left by a parent. Other children might offer advice or words of reassurance that could be recorded in the class journal and lead to writing opportunities afterwards.
- You could have similar sessions dealing with children’s feelings about the dark and night-time or even sibling relationships.
## Shared reading, revisiting and retelling

- Read the story on several occasions, encouraging the children to chime in as they become more confident with key phrases in the story, particularly the dialogue.
- Prepare story props of the characters to use for your oral telling of the story and to support children’s independent retelling. There are many different kinds of props you can collect or make – from plastic owls, fluffy owls of different sizes, knitted owls, magnetic images, puppets etc.
- Provide extra copies of the book, alongside the props to support the children’s retelling and early attempts at reading. The familiarity of the story will be extremely enabling as the children begin to focus on the print.
- You might model telling the story from mother owl’s viewpoint, drawing on notes from the hot-seating session.
- Children could write and illustrate their retellings in a handmade zig-zag book.

## Audio stories, rhymes and songs and Paired reading – matching spoken word to the printed word

- Create a home-made audio book by recording yourself or the children reading the book aloud or retelling it and copying onto a format that can be shared with the children, e.g. CD or MP3. Alternatively make available a commercially available audio book. Different language versions could be provided with support from bilingual support teachers or parents.
- Provide opportunities for the children to revisit the text by listening to it whilst reading the book, reinforcing the oral match with the print on the page.
- You could build a class collection of core stories, songs and rhymes, (commercially produced or home-made) that the children can listen to and practise matching spoken to printed word in familiar contexts.
- Once the children have memorised the language of the story through repeated readings, they can be given copies of the story to read to partners. This helps children to see themselves as readers.
- The children can be supported in tuning in to the print on the pages, applying their understanding of one-to-one correspondence to familiar words and phrases.

## Role-Play and re-enactment

- Provide props, such as owl puppets and large sticks/branches so that the story can be acted out using the indoor or outdoor role-play area.
- The children could create a forest scene in the outdoor area using woodland/large sheets of black paper if you do not have access to trees.
- Encourage the children to act out the story as and when you read it.
- Create a small world of the story in a tuff tray, recreating the dark night in the forest, providing appropriate figures for the children to play out the story.
- Observe the children as they engage in imaginative role-play activities. Take photographs for them to talk about and sequence afterwards.
- Provide small handmade zig-zag books for children to draw and write their own stories.

## Drama and Role-Play

- Revisit various illustrations within the text and gather ideas about what the children think is happening in each picture.
- Split the children into small groups and encourage each group to act out a different illustration in the story. Model how to use voice and intonation to express how a character feels and make provision for the children to create sound effects with their voices and percussion instruments.
- Act out the story to the class by getting each group to perform its scene in chronological order.

## Book-based Games – tuning in to print

- Make a book-based reading game, for example using the sentence:  
  
  “I want my mummy,” said Bill.

- You will need to make or buy a blank dice with each word written on a face.
- You will need to make a base board with the six words and enough sets of cards for each play (4-6 children is a good number). You can decorate the board with images from the story.
The dice is thrown and when the child recognises the word which is uppermost (e.g. **Bill**), s/he then picks up a matching card and places it over the same word on their base board.

The winner is the player that first matches all six words.

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**Drawing and Annotating - Family Trees**

- Before discussing family members and structures, ensure you have liaised with parents around any recent changes in circumstances. Deal with this sensitivity so that all children feel their circumstances are understood and valued. Provide the children with a comfortable, secure environment in which they feel confident to talk and listen.
- Ask the children to bring in some photos of their family members. Each child could then use these photos to make their own family tree. This would allow each child to talk about their family members, memories and stories of home life with a member of staff in the setting.
- Parents could be invited into the setting to complete the family tree with their child. This may ease any anxieties they have about their own family circumstances.
- Always ensure that the child and their family feel supported and valued, especially in cases where a child may not know many or any other family members other than their mother or father, or when there has been bereavement in the family. A child may want to talk about this with you. Give them time, and allow them to represent those who are absent, if they wish.
- Have a selection of books available about different family structures which you can read to children who are in such situations, such as:
  - *The Family Book* by Todd Parr (Little, Brown)
  - *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman and Ros Asquith (Frances Lincoln)
- Have books readily available to support children who are grieving which you can lend out from the setting. Here are some examples:
  - *Grandad’s Island* by Benji Davies (Simon & Schuster)
  - *A Sky of Diamonds: A Story for Children about Loss, Grief and Hope* by Camille Gibbs (Jessica Kingsley)
- Display the children’s family trees and provide them with a space where they can sit and talk about their unique family structure with their peers. Encourage them to ask their peers questions about their family members, e.g.
  - *Why are they special to you?*
  - *What is your favourite thing about...?*

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**Shrine Boxes**

*A Shrine Box can be immensely supportive for a child to talk about themselves, their family – past and present - and their*
lives. It might include: family photographs, notes and cards, a favourite poem or book, travel memorabilia or tickets, special items of clothing from babyhood, and a special toy. It provides opportunity for rich talk amongst family members whilst collecting and decorating the box.

- Engage the parents in a family learning project by asking them to share stories with their children about when they were babies and toddlers. The children could collect photographs of themselves or special objects that would help retell the stories and which provide an insight into the child’s family life.
- Children could bring in an old box/shoe box in which to collect their special objects. Provide the children with various resources to decorate this box however they wish e.g. with paint, sequins etc.
- Allow the children to share their shrine boxes and stories with family members, peers, key person and teacher.
- The children could keep these boxes in the setting and add to them. They could then be stored carefully and passed on to the next teacher/setting to ease transition. This will also support the next practitioners in getting to know the children’s family situation before the child starts with them.

- You could make a ‘class family shrine box’ to which every person within the community of the setting (child, adult, parent, cleaner, cook) could contribute. It could then be displayed for visitors to look at and talk about with the children. The setting could also make a ‘setting family tree’ using photos of the Key Person and their key children or teachers and the groups within the class.

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

The owls on the branch shout “Where’s our mum, where’s our mum, where’s our mum?”

The owls on the branch shout “Where’s our mum”, All night long.

The owls in the nest cry “Come back mum, come back mum, come back mum.”

The owls in the nest cry “Come back mum”, All night long.

The owls flapped and danced when she came back, she came, she came back.

The owls flapped and danced when she came back, all night long.

Encourage the children to decide upon actions and intonation when singing this song.

Research and discussion: Night time

- Ask the children to talk about and compare night and day.
- Discuss the difference between nocturnal and crepuscular animals.
- Place two large ‘hula hoops’ on the floor and gather all of the small world animals within the setting. Have the children sort them between ‘night’ animals and ‘day’ animals.
- Encourage the children to talk about when they have stayed up after dark - in the winter months, at social, cultural or religious events, festivals, celebrations of light, on holiday or when travelling.
- In the winter months, you could invite the children into school in the early evening with their parents for bedtime stories by candlelight. Before they settle for stories, allow the children to explore the classroom/outdoor area at night. Encourage them to record any differences they notice in their environment and any changes in feelings compared to how they feel at school during the day:
  - How does it look at night? How does it make you feel? Why?
What can you hear? How are the sounds the same or different from the daytime?
What happens when you shine a torch? How would it look without a torch?

**Researching owls and common garden birds: Reading non-fiction texts and observation**

- Put together a collection of information texts and storybooks about owls and other native and garden birds for children to look at, read and talk about. This will be a useful collection to draw on both in reading aloud sessions and for children to choose from when taking books home, e.g.:
  - *White Owl, Barn Owl* by Nicola Davies and Michael Foreman (Walker Books)
  - *RSPB My First Book of Garden Birds* by Mike Unwin, Sarah Whittley and Rachel Lockwood
  - RSPB Guide to the top 50 garden birds fold-out chart
  - Website: www.rspb.org.uk
- Provide a variety of resources nearby that children can use to draw or write about anything of interest they find out. You might create a bird spotter kit with the children, which could include binoculars, digital cameras, field journals, writing and drawing materials and posters or fact files about common native birds. Create a nature area in the setting that encourages birds, with bird feeders, bird baths and natural materials that birds might use to create their nests.
- Make a regular time for children to talk to the class about anything that they have observed or discovered for themselves or to which they would like to draw other children’s attention.

**Shared writing, Bookmaking and Publishing: Information writing**

- Write a class book about owls or garden birds in shared and group writing, adding a new page each day about something that the children have observed or found out.
- Children can illustrate each page using a variety of media and organise the book for their readers with page numbers, a contents page and even a glossary.
- More experienced writers could go on to write their own information books using homemade zig-zag books.
- When finished, these should be shared with the class and put into the book corner or nature area for everyone to use and enjoy.
### Other ideas for Continuous Provision

#### PSED
- Have a photo display of the children’s families (at their eye level) which they can use to stimulate conversation between themselves and their peers about their own family life.
- Provide the children with a varied ‘home’ role-play area where they can re-enact the family roles as they see them within their own household.

#### Physical Development
- Provide the children with a paper plate, feathers, collage pieces and googly eyes. Encourage them to make paper plate owls by selecting their materials and sticking them using tweezers only!
- Provide blocks, logs and natural materials in the construction area to allow the children to make a tree/nest structure.
- Allow the children to weave with sticks to make an owl nest.
- Warm up for a physical development lesson, basing the movement on that of owls.
- Provide the children with a variety of equipment in which they can practise balancing on like owls/other types of birds.

#### Communication and Language
- Create an interest table where the children can put family artefacts that are special to them. All children can approach the table, select an object, find out who it belongs to, and ask that child questions about it or the story behind it.
- Have owl stories playing on a CD player for the children to sit and listen to. They could record things they hear onto clipboards to share what they have learnt.
- Have a weekly show and tell session with the theme of ‘family life.’
- Create feely boxes which contain sensory things, e.g. baked beans, a smooth pebble, a feather, for the children to identify as they describe its smell, sounds and how it feels without looking.

#### Literacy

##### Reading
- Provide owl puppets in the reading area that the children can use to retell the story with.
- Have other stories available for the children to explore such as:
  - *The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark* by Jill Tomlinson and Paul Howard (Egmont)
  - *Hoot Owl, Master of Disguise* by Sean Taylor and Jean Jullien (Walker Books)
  - *Oola the Owl Who Lost Her Hoot!* by Tim Bugbird and Clare Fennell (Make Believe Ideas)
  - *The Owl and the Pussycat* by Edward Lear and Ian Beck (Corgi)
  - *So Much* by Trish Cooke and Helen Oxenbury (Walker Books)
  - *The Large Family* series by Jill Murphy (Walker Books)
  - Family stories by Anthony Browne such as *My Dad, My Mum, My Brother* (Corgi)
  - *The Dark* by Lemony Snicket and Jon Klassen (Orchard)
  - *Orion and the Dark* by Emma Yarlett (Templar)
- Create a word bank as leaves on a tree.
- In the small world area create a forest scene with soil, sticks, leaves and owl/bird figures for the children to explore these textures and retell the story with. This could be within a tent to create a night-time atmosphere.

##### Writing
- Create a feelings box where the children can write and then ‘post’ how they are feeling.
- Have a large piece of white paper and a large piece of black paper attached to a wall. Allow the children to write words/sounds which describe their feelings towards day-time/night-time using pen for the day words and chalk for the night words.
- Develop a class post office centre where the children can write notes to their family members which can then be taken home.
Maths

Number
- Count the number of owls that are in different parts of the story. Compare the numbers, their size and their worth, encourage children to practise writing these numbers.
- Estimate and count the number of sticks it would take to make an owls’ nest.
- Challenge the children to see how many worms they can find outside. Encourage them to record this in their own way.

Shape, space and measure
- Provide the children with photos of birds and encourage them to make a pattern using the photos e.g. mother owl, baby owl, mother owl, baby owl.
- Order the owls in the story in terms of their size, from biggest to smallest.
- Order nests/worms discovered in the outdoor area in terms of their size.

Understanding the World
- Allow the children to create ‘night pictures’ using the class tablet/computer on Paint or 2simple.
- Teach the children facts about owls and other nocturnal animals provide them with non-fiction books.
- Create an ‘investigation station’ for the children with magnifying glasses, mirrors, feathers, sticks etc.
- Create a bird bath in the water tray.
- Investigate birds, placing bird feeders and water trays outside. Allow the children to monitor and record what they observe. Set up a camera and print out still photos of the birds. Allow the children to annotate these in their own way.
- Look at people who help us. Invite local police/fireman into the setting to give a safety talk about what the children should do if they lose their parent/carer.

Expressive Art and Design
- Sing animal action songs with the children such as ‘Two Little Dickie Birds’.
- Encourage the children to engage in the text by playing alongside them and extending their play. Provide them with resources which they can build their play around.
- Provide the children with resources to make owl paintings/puppets.
- Allow children to experiment with colour mixing by providing black paper, chalk and paint. They could paint a firework/bonfire scene.
- Allow the children to make large scale pictures outdoors using the floor and things found in the natural environment e.g. mud painting inside a stick photo frame.