



Old Mother West Wind

A WALDORF-INSPIRED NATURE BLOCK

BY KIMBERLY PARSONS OF HEARTH & GNOME

This block is perfect for fine-weather days wherever you live. For our family, it was a way to continue our family learning rhythm lending structure to our days, but in a more expansive, relaxed way. This block can be a beautiful out breath. We were able to review some concepts and skills - but not in a too heady way - and most importantly, I was able to give them what they most needed in the moment: beauty, stability, and *fun as a family*.

In this learning guide based on *Old Mother West Wind* by Thornton W. Burgess, the primary focus is on nature study. In addition to the nature study elements, we focused on creative writing and phonics review. There are many additional elements in this learning guide as well. *Use only the ideas in this block that are right for you.* Do not think you have to do every activity to do it "right!" I tried to come up with as many ideas as possible to give you lots of options, but never intended anyone do every single activity in this guide.

Please consider tagging me in any photos you choose to share. I would love to see! My Insta handle is @HearthandGnome or on Facebook #HearthAndGnome. You can also email me at kimberly@hearthandgnome. I will never share your photos without permission.

I wish you peace and wellness. The year 2020 has been difficult for all of us. We are all doing the best we can with what we have to work with and I sincerely hope this is a helpful tool to you. There is much beauty and goodness in the world. My wish is that this little guide helps you to find it. - Kimberly

Block Features

- 4 Verses and 5 Songs
- English and Language Arts Connections - Vocabulary, Suggested Phonics Review, Copy Work, Writing Prompts and Skill Builders including Letters to the Editor, newspaper submissions, letters, and a radio program
- Math Connections
- Nature Study
- Citizen Science Activities - Participate in real-world scientific research
- Ecology - Wind Power, Balloon Debris, Sentinel Species
- Map Making
- Lively Arts - Modeling, Painting, Collage, Drawing
- Handwork
- Recipes
- Outdoor Activity Ideas
- Sensory activities
- Starting a family gratitude practice
- Internet links to wildlife videos and the complete anime series based on the work of Thornton Burgess!

Books Needed

Old Mother West Wind, by Harrison Cady. Page numbers in this guide are from the Golden Anniversary Edition published by Little, Brown in paperback in 1985.

Guidebooks for your local/state flora and fauna, either in physical form or online sources.

Extras

Now I Remember: The Autobiography of Thornton Burgess, Thornton Burgess

Nature's Ambassador: The Legacy of Thornton W. Burgess, Christie Palmer Lowrance

Lesson 1

If you are following this block as-written, you will share two stories today. We wanted this block to last three weeks, but there are sixteen stories.

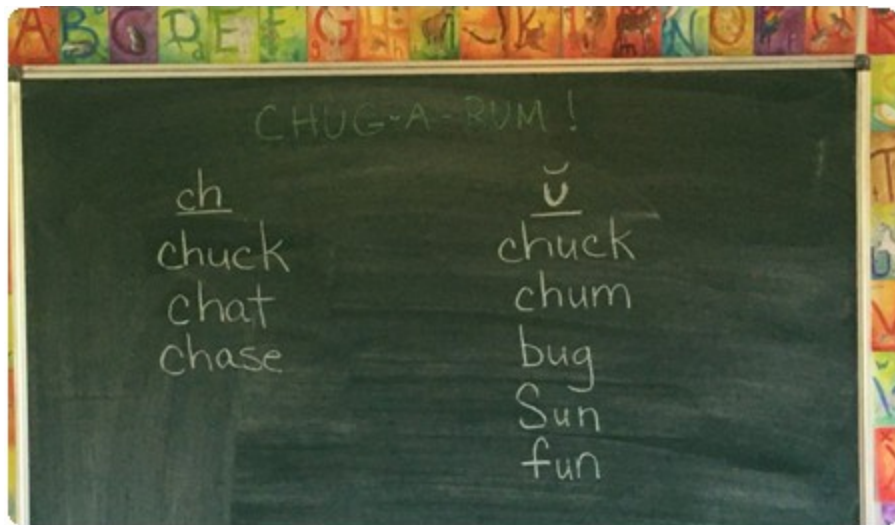
Set the stage with some verses and songs.

Read "Mrs. Redwing's Speckled Egg."

Vocabulary.

cross 4 - annoyed
sharp 8 - perceptive
wee 9 - tiny
intent 16 - focused
ill 18 - bad

Suggested Phonics Review Review: *ü* and *ch*



Math Connection: Count the birds and other wildlife you see - either as a group, or by type. Create a graph to compare the number you see each day.

Write About It! Write about what you see from your window. What plants do you see? What birds and animals? Insects? Describe them and tell what they are doing. For pre-writers or pre-readers, they can dictate and the adult can transcribe what they say.

Check your guide to local wildlife. What birds are common where you live? Draw some.



Redwing

Make a Map. Make a map of your yard, park, green-space, or even your patio. Think about what lives, hunts, nests there. We made this a week-long project and it was amazing to see what my children knew about who was living in our space, their habits, and the fun names they came up with for favorite spots.



Read "How Reddy Fox Was Surprised."

Birds and Their Eggs Matching Activity

Print these and cut them apart. *How well can your children match birds with their eggs? Which ones were most surprising?*

Key:

Row 1: Blue Jay and Eggs

Row 2: Cardinal and Eggs

Row 3: Rhode Island Red Chicken and Eggs

Row 4: Hummingbird and Eggs

Row 5: Ostrich and Eggs

Row 6: Robin and Eggs

Row 7: Sparrow and Eggs

Row 8: Robin and Eggs







Lesson 2

Set the stage with some verses and songs.

Review the stories from yesterday. If you wish, have children draw from the story and write or dictate a brief summary using any spelling, grammar, and punctuation concepts and skills you taught during the year.

Check your guide to local wildlife. Do foxes or any near relatives (wolves, coyotes, jackals, wild dogs) live near you? Draw some.

Vocabulary.

pollywogs 20 - tadpoles

vain 21 - overly proud

start 22 - poke out

Read "Why Grandfather Frog Has No Tail"

Suggested Phonics Review Review: ö



Math Connection: Do you have pets with tails? Will they let you measure them? Which pet has the longest tail? Which pet has the shortest? Older children may enjoy some calculations based on the tails in Grandfather Frog's story. If the average frog had a tail 6" long, how long was King Frog's? If King Frog's tail was 30" long, how long was the average frog's tail? And so on.

Write About It! Thornton Burgess wrote over 170 books and around 15,000 articles and stories in his lifetime. Today, write *just one* about an animal you love. You can write what you know about the animal, or imagine a story with the animal as a main character. We made this a unit-long activity, setting aside a short time each day to create a new tale, add to one in progress, or add an illustration. My older child wrote independently. My younger child dictated his stories to me and I wrote them down for him.

Learn About Frogs

Check your guide to local wildlife. What frogs are common where you live?

All frogs begin their lives as an egg in the water. When they first hatch, they are little more than a head and a long, wriggly tail. They are called tadpoles. As they grow, the tadpoles sprout arms and legs, and their tail grows shorter and shorter until it completely disappears! Gradually, they learn to breathe outside the water and can live on soil in addition to swimming in the water. Here is a great video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmlac1b3K2o>



Model each stage of a frog's development with clay.



Citizen Science: FrogWatchUSA provides opportunities to learn about wetlands in your community by reporting on the calls of local frogs and toads.

Learn more at

<https://www.aza.org/frogwatch>

Fat Green Flies Popsicles

White grape juice

Green seedless grapes, chopped

Popsicle forms

Wash and chop* the grapes. Fill each form about 2/3 - 3/4 full. Pour in juice, leaving room for expansion as the pops freeze. Assemble popsicle form according to your brand's instructions and freeze. Ours took several hours in the deep freeze.

*My child wanted really fat green "flies," so we only halved the grapes. They froze just fine, but when eating them, the "flies" had a tendency to break off in chunks. We ate them with joy, but I do recommend smaller pieces.

