



Frederick

About the story

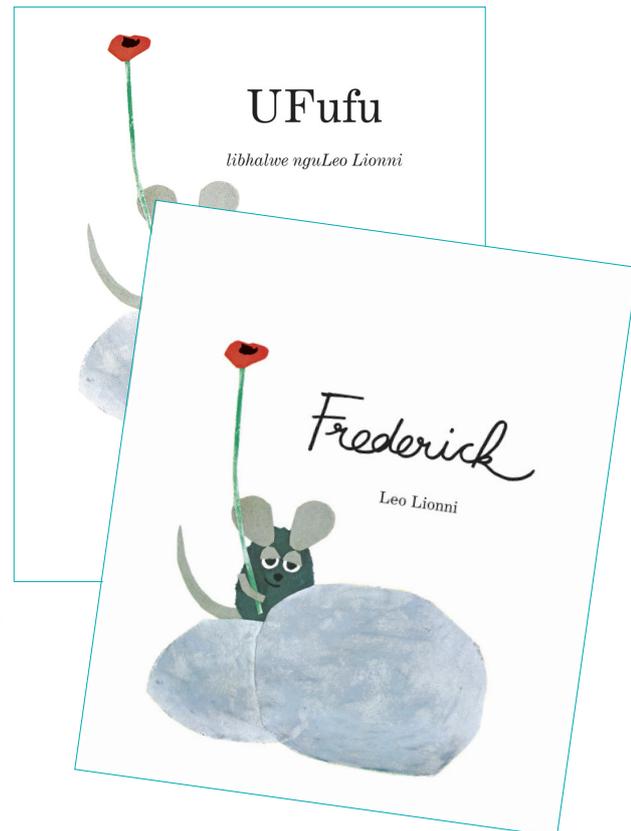
Title: Frederick

Story and illustrations: Leo Lionni

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Available in English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu and Sesotho

A family of field mice work day and night, gathering provisions for the coming winter – except for Frederick. As they busily collect and store wheat, nuts and corn, they reproach Frederick for dreaming the lazy summer away. But during the long cold winter, when all their stores have been used up, Frederick proves to his family that he has done his share – using his imaginative powers! Through this book, children are encouraged to think about the importance not just of material goods but also of feeding their souls with love and beauty.



Possible themes and topics

- Seasons: hibernation in winter
- Small animals
- Family
- Imagination
- Festivals and special occasions
- Poetry
- Farming
- Work and play
- Jobs people do
- Homes and houses
- Colours
- Seeds and growth
- Classifying (sorting) objects using different criteria

Ideas for activities

Here are some ideas for using *Frederick* with young children aged four to six years. Choose the activities that best suit the particular ages and interests of the children in your class.

You could use the story and activity ideas to tie in with your weekly theme and/or as part of the children's afternoon free-play sessions to enhance their play and their literacy learning.

Introducing and sharing the story

Create an atmosphere of anticipation linked to the main theme of the story. Stimulate the children's curiosity. Encourage thinking and imagining.

Activity suggestions

- ★ Cut out mouseholes from black paper and stick them along the skirting boards of the classroom. Leave a trail of seeds and dried grass nearby. Place a few tiny written "mouse" notes with different messages on them around the room – for example: "Hello! Can you guess what I am?", "Hello! Can you guess my name?", "Eek! We are hungry. What can we eat?". If there is an outside play area, dig a few little "mouse" holes there. Encourage the children to explore these things with you and discuss what they might mean.
- ★ Show the children the book cover and ask if it might have anything to do with the mysterious things that have appeared in the classroom.
- ★ Read the title of the story and say, "I wonder if this is a boy or a girl or a mouse ... a child mouse or an adult mouse. How would we know?" Then ask, "What do you think the mouse on the cover might be thinking?"
- ★ Read the story aloud to the children, allowing them to comment if they want to, but be sure to keep the story alive all the way through to the end.

Thinking and talking about the story

Choose from the suggested discussion questions – try ones that you think best match the children's interests and add your own questions too! Only continue for as long as the children are involved.

Encourage the children to give reasons for their answers. When they aren't able to, you can help them by saying, "I wonder if..." and suggesting a reason to them. Share your own ideas with the children too. Children often feel encouraged to contribute when they also hear your thoughts.

Discussion questions

- ★ What do you think a poet is?
- ★ If you had to collect food for winter, what would you choose to collect and why?
- ★ Do you like to be chatty or quiet? Why?
- ★ Do you think you are more like Frederick, or more like the other mice? Why?
- ★ I wonder why Frederick blushed and was shy after the other mice said he was a poet. What makes you feel shy?

- ★ What is your favourite colour? Do you have a reason for liking this colour best?
- ★ Does anyone want to tell a story about cats or foolish foxes like the mice did?

Playing with the story

Offer different materials and ideas for the children to retell or “play” parts of the story, and/or to make up new stories that connect with their own lives. Take the opportunity to observe the children’s language and conceptual development as well as the interaction between them as they take control of their own learning.

Activity suggestions

- ★ Make mice from playdough, clay, stones or recycled cardboard, or knit them using wool. Encourage the children to use the mice to tell their own stories as they play and construct.
- ★ Make little mice worlds and homes in the outside play area by digging holes and building walls using pebbles. Inside the classroom, you can use wooden blocks and/or recycled materials like empty cardboard boxes.
- ★ Recreate scenes from the book with construction toys like Lego or Duplo.
- ★ Provide the children with scissors, pieces of paper, bottle tops, stones, leaves, seeds, shells, sticks, and water and sand to make mud. Allow them to “invent” and make their own imaginary food for the mice.
- ★ Provide materials for the children to make mice homes and pretend to be mice and mice families.
- ★ Invite the children to become colour collectors. Divide them into groups and give each group a container to collect colours in. Allow them to decide what it means to collect colours. They could find one natural or human-made object that has many colours, or various objects of the same colour. Or they could collect crayons or drawings. Afterwards, remind the children that Frederick asked the mice to close their eyes, and that, “...they saw the colours as clearly as if they had been painted in their minds”. Let everyone close their eyes while each group talks about the colours they managed to find.
- ★ Hide some words from the story (outside, if possible) and invite the children to find them. Then help them to read the words.

Shared reading and writing

Focus the children’s attention on how we compose a piece of writing and how letters and sounds combine to make words. Write on the chalkboard or on large sheets of paper with groups of children, so that they compose with you and watch you as you write. Read out what you have written to them afterwards, pointing to the words.

Activity suggestions

- ★ Together, write different lists of, for example, colours the children would like to collect or different food the mice could collect.
- ★ Read a letter from the mouse family to the children that you have prepared already. (See an example at the end of this leaflet.) Then together, write a response to it. Read it aloud.

- ★ Write down ideas for what a mouse's house might look like and what it might have in it.
- ★ Write two headings on the chalkboard or a large sheet of paper: food, stories. Ask the children which of these they think is more important and why. Record the children's comments under the relevant heading.
- ★ Write the word "mouse" on the chalkboard or a large sheet of paper. Read it and ask the children: Does anyone's name begin with an M or end with an E? Can you see a letter in the word that is also in your name? Does anyone have an SE next to each other in their name? As the children answer these questions, write up their names, pointing to and sounding the letters as you go. When you've written up the name, read it aloud with the children.
- ★ With the children, choose a few interesting sentences from the book. You could write these out on strips of paper. For example: "I gather sun rays for the cold dark winter days.", "I gather colours.", "Are you dreaming, Frederick?", "Now I send you the rays of the sun".
- ★ Invite some children to choose one and display it for a few days at the children's eye level, and if they are interested, show the children where the sentences are in the book. Encourage them to find these alone or with a friend.

Emergent reading, writing and drawing

Make time and space available for the children to initiate drawing and writing. Spend time sitting with them, sometimes writing and drawing too. In this way you are able to role model conventional practice and give help if the children ask for it. Show that you value the children's own attempts at reading and writing.

Activity suggestions

- ★ Offer one or more copies of *Frederick* to the children so that they can retell or "read" it alone and/or with friends.
- ★ Encourage the children to make little storybooks on tiny pieces of paper for the mice. They can leave the books outside the classroom door together with the mouse food they make.
- ★ Suggest that the children make cards for Frederick using only their favourite colour.
- ★ Invite them to make lists of jobs that mice can do.
- ★ Encourage the children to draw a picture/s of the mouse family and to give names to all of the mice. They could also create other mouse-family members and decide what they like to do.
- ★ With the children turn the classroom book corner into a cosy "mouse-house" reading den by using blankets and making a sign that says, "MICE READING. DO NOT DISTURB".
- ★ In the book corner, include fiction and non-fiction books that tie in with the themes of the story – information books about mice, poetry books and stories about mice, farms, houses, food and colours. Introduce these books to the children, read them or explore them with the children if they ask.

Dictating, scribing and acting out stories

As part of Storyplay, PRAESA offers and supports a specialised technique for dictating, scribing and acting out stories, called the magic carpet. To find out more about this, contact info@praesa.org.za and see www.praesa.org.za for training and mentoring opportunities.

Activity suggestion

- ★ Invite the children to dictate their own stories. These might relate to *Frederick* but they don't have to. Write down the children's stories for them and make time for acting them out.

Taking the story home

Encourage the parents or other caregivers to do all or some of the activities below at home with their children.

Activity suggestions

- ★ If their child brings home a magic carpet story to share, read it to him/her or ask someone else to read it aloud.
- ★ Ask their child to retell the story or tell them about the storybook they are reading at "school".
- ★ Borrow *Frederick* from the library. Then read it to their child or look through it together, talking about the illustrations.
- ★ Look at pictures their child draws and read any attempts at writing he/she shows them, asking "What did you draw/write?".
- ★ When they go shopping, encourage their child to look for fruit and vegetables that Frederick and his friends might like to eat. Then at home, to write a list of these fruit and vegetables.
- ★ Together, make a mouse house (from an empty packet or box) and a little mouse (from cardboard, with a piece of string or wool for a tail) to live in the house. Suggest that they ask their child to name the mouse and then tell stories together about it.
- ★ Draw a mouse picture together and then make up a story to go with it.
- ★ Together, write a note to the mice telling them about the child's family.

Example of letter

24 June 2018

Dear Friends

Thank you so much for the food you left for us outside your classroom door.

It was very kind of you. The winter has come. Brrrrrr ... we are so cold.

We have eaten all of our food and told all of our stories.

We need more!

Please can you send us some of your stories and make us more food?

Thank you so much.

The Mouse Family