

An Extraordinary Egg

About the story

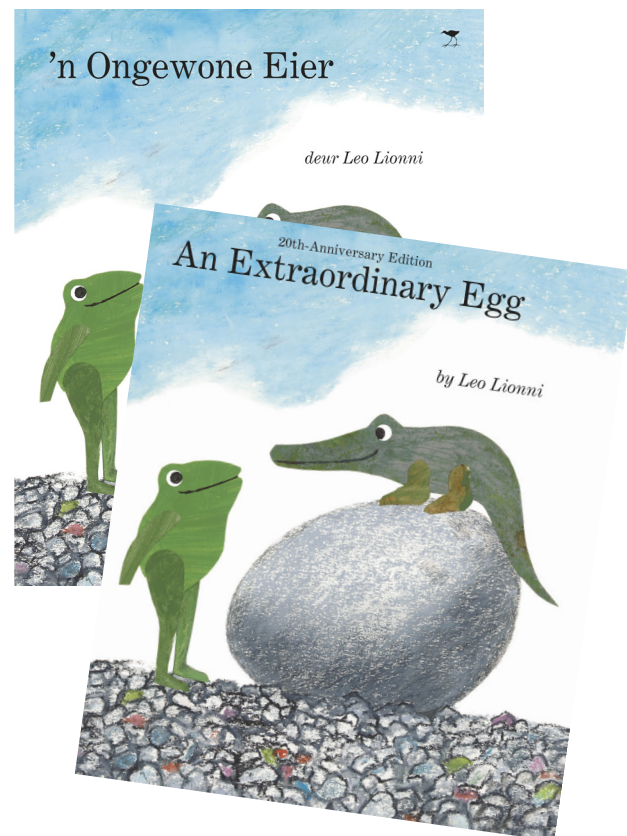
Title: An Extraordinary Egg

Story and illustrations: Leo Lionni

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Available in English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu and Sesotho

It's an ordinary day on Pebble Island for three frogs until one of them discovers a beautiful white egg. They've never seen a chicken egg before, but they are sure that's what this must be. So naturally, when the egg hatches and out crawls a long green, scaly creature, they call it a chicken!



Possible themes and topics

- Islands versus large land masses
- Things that live and grow in rivers
- Rocks
- Reptiles
- Animals that hatch from eggs
- The life cycle of frogs
- 3D-objects that roll
- Floating and sinking
- Time: day and night
- Families
- People who love us
- Similarities and differences

Ideas for activities

Here are some ideas for using *An Extraordinary Egg* 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

- ★ Collect some empty egg shells and clean them. Make a few piles of the egg shells in a prominent place in the classroom. Leave a note next to them that says, "Dear Mom and Dad, I have gone exploring." Ask the children to suggest what this could be about. Encourage them to share their ideas with the group.
- ★ Show the front cover of the book. Ask the children if they think the story might have anything to do with the above mysterious things that have appeared in the classroom.
- ★ Read the title of the story. Invite comments about what the children see on the front cover and what the story might be about.
- ★ 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 does the word "extraordinary" in the title mean? What things do you know that are extraordinary?
- ★ What do they think it means to be "full of wonder"? Have you ever found something that made you feel "full of wonder" like Jessica? What was it?
- ★ I wonder how the egg landed up lying among a pile of pebbles. What do you think?

- ★ What do you think the strange noise coming from the egg sounded like? Could it have been a squeak, a scratch, a knock or something else?
- ★ Why do you think the “chicken” asked, “Where is the water?” when it hatched out of the egg?
- ★ How do we know what chickens look like?
- ★ I wonder if the author of the story knew what chickens look like. What do you think?
- ★ Can we call things by different names? If everyone called crocodiles “chickens”, could they actually be chickens?
- ★ If you got stuck somewhere, like poor Jessica did in the dark pool, who would you want to rescue you?
- ★ Jessica took her friend to her secret thinking place. What might you do in a place like that?
- ★ How do you think that the mother alligator recognised her baby? How does your mommy recognise you?
- ★ How could we help the three frogs learn what a chicken looks like?
- ★ What else do you think might come from an egg?
- ★ I wonder how the red and blue bird knew to tell the chicken that her mother was looking for her. What do you think?

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 clay or playdough frogs, alligators and/or pebbles.
- ★ Use sand, pebbles and other natural materials to make an island world for the playdough frogs and alligators.
- ★ Use clay or playdough to make the perfect egg.
- ★ Make pebbles from clay or playdough and stack them on top of one another to create a tower.
- ★ Collect pebbles outside and paint them to make them look extraordinary.
- ★ Create secret thinking places.
- ★ Make a sign which says, “Wait for your mom here.” and suggest the children play being mothers and missing babies.
- ★ Work together as a group to construct a giant egg made from a balloon and papier mâché.
- ★ Recreate scenes from the book using construction toys like Lego/Duplo or recycled materials.

- ★ Play the game, hide-and-seek.
- ★ Play the game, "Who are you?". Make a name card for each child in the class. Seat the children in a circle. Hand out the name cards randomly (i.e. each child is given someone else's name) and read the name on the card aloud together as you do this. Give each child an opportunity to identify the real owner of the name card like this: a child asks another one, "Who are you?" and when this child answers, "I am Thando" he is given the card with his name on it. Continue in this way until everyone has a card with their own name on it.

Shared reading and writing

Focus 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

- ★ Ask the children to suggest animals/creatures that hatch (or might hatch) from eggs. Make a list of the children's suggestions.
- ★ Together make a "MISSING" poster that describes the missing baby: what it looks like, what sounds it makes, and what it likes to eat and play.
- ★ Ask the children to help you write a letter to the mother alligator telling her where her baby is.
- ★ Ask the children to suggest a few words that they think are "extraordinary". Write these down on the chalkboard or a large sheet of paper and ask the children what they think the words mean. Try sounding them out together and then decide together why the words are extraordinary.
- ★ Brainstorm and record the children's ideas for making the book corner look like Pebble Island. Also write a list of the things you could use or make to do this.
- ★ On a large sheet of paper, draw an outline of a big oval egg. Ask the children to suggest what you could say to the unborn chicken about what is going to happen to it in the story. Start off by saying and writing in the space around the egg, "Hello, Chicken. We know that ...". Then record the children's suggestions around the egg, for example, "you're going to hatch", "you're going to meet three frogs". After you've finished writing, invite the children to draw what they like inside within the egg outline – for example, they could draw little eggs containing baby chicks, crocodiles or other little creatures.
- ★ Write the word "egg" on the chalkboard or a large sheet of paper. Read it and ask the children: Does anyone's name begin with an E or end with a G? Can you see a letter in the word that is also in your name? Does anyone have two G's in their name like in "egg"? 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.

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 *An Extraordinary Egg* to the children so that they can retell or "read" it alone and/or with friends.
- ★ Ask the children to make their own "MISSING" posters to help the mother alligator find her child.
- ★ Suggest that the children write thank-you letters to the frogs for looking after the baby alligator.
- ★ Invite the children to make maps to help the mother alligator find her baby.
- ★ Make small, blank egg-shaped books for the children to draw and write their own stories in.
- ★ Use props the children find and/or make to turn the book corner into your own version of Pebble Island.
- ★ In the book corner, include fiction and non-fiction books that tie in with the themes of the story – stories and information books about eggs, frogs, crocodiles, alligators, and chickens as well as stories about creatures that are reunited with their parents. 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 *An Extraordinary Egg* 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

- ★ Ask their child to retell the story or tell them about the storybook they are reading at "school".
- ★ Borrow *An Extraordinary Egg* from the library. Then read it to their child or look through it together, talking about the illustrations.

- ★ Send a letter home with the children, explaining that you've been reading a book called *An Extraordinary Egg*, and thinking about what the word "extraordinary" means. Ask the parents/other caregivers to talk to their children about extraordinary things or experiences that they think might interest their child.
- ★ Look at pictures their child draws and read any attempts at writing he/she shows them, asking, "What did you draw/write?".
- ★ Ask the parents to write down stories that their children tell them and then to send the stories to "school" so that they can be shared with the other children.