Let’s talk about Handa’s Hen

By Eileen Browne

In this story Handa is looking for her grandmother’s missing black hen, named Mondi. Handa and her friend, Akeyo look all over their village. They keep finding other animals but not the hen. The numbers of animals they find keeps increasing, as well, from 2 butterflies, to 3 mice, and so on. Where is Mondi and what is she doing? Your child will be curious to keep searching with Handa and Akeyo. In this ASL storytelling, Simone engages the reader to search along with her by using her body and eyes to look for the animals—under the grain store, behind the clay pots, etc. The Le Clerc Centre’s Shared Reading Project recommends **“using eye gaze to elicit participation”** as one of their principles for reading to deaf children. When you get involved in retelling the story, your child will be engaged by your enthusiasm.

Let’s Learn About Language

Handa and her friend, Akeyo, find lots of animals while they are looking for her grandmother’s hen, Mondi. Handa keeps asking “But where’s Mondi?” In ASL, asking questions involves matching your facial expression or nonmanual marker to the kind of question you are asking. If the question is a “WH”-type question (requires more than yes/no answer) e.g. who, what, where, when, why, which, how, or how many, then you put your eyebrows down. If the question requires only a yes/no answer then you put your eyebrows up while asking the question.

WH - q = eyebrows down

Yes/no – q = eyebrows up

Let's Play Together

Hide and Seek Animals

Here is a fun hide and seek game you can play with your child to help them practice their counting. In your pack you have pictures of the animals Handa and Akeyo find in the book. Colour and cut out the pictures. Now you are ready to play. Hide the animals around the house and ask your child to find them. For younger children you can keep the sets of animals together. For older children, you can cut the individual animals apart and hide them around the room. For example, if your child finds 3 bullfrogs in one spot then 4 more in another, they can count to see how many they have altogether. On the inside back cover of the book are pictures of all the animals. Your child can match the pictures they found to the ones in the book so he can see if he found them all. Refer to the video for the animal signs.

Here are some signs you might use when you play this game:

Butterfly where? OR when your child has found the butterflies, you could ask how many he found. **Butterfly how many?**

Another way to play might be to ask your child to look for the butterflies.

Butterfly look for (you aren't asking a question in this case so your eyebrows are neutral)

where?

look for/search

how many?

An important tip when you are asking your child to look for the animals is to maintain eye contact with them. You are engaging them with your eyes so they will be excited to play along.

Read More About It!

If your child is interested to read another adventure with Handa and Akeyo, Eileen Browne has another book called, *Handa's Surprise*. In this story, Handa is taking a basket of fruit to Akeyo, but along the way something surprising happens to the fruit.

Did you notice how Simone adjusts her ASL retelling to account for sound-based comments? Near the end of the book, Handa and Akeyo hear "cheep, cheep" coming from the bushes. Rather than signing "listen" the word in the book, Simone signs "feel" the rustling of the bushes. This small adjustment will help the deaf child relate more to the story.

Let's Play with Rhymes

Here is a little hide and seek game from ASL Mother Goose that you can play with your young child. Sign your child's name sign and the sign for where? Then pretend to look for your child: look under her arm, under her leg, behind her back, etc. Then pretend to find her right in front of you! Surprise! Point to her, sign her name. Then give her a big hug!