

Let's talk about **A Porcupine in a Pine Tree**

By Helaine Becker

This book is a retelling of the traditional Christmas song "The Twelve Days of Christmas", but instead of the usual turtledoves and partridge in a pear tree, there are uniquely Canadian images that may be more familiar to children. And if they are not familiar, it can be a fun opportunity to learn about some images that have become part of the Canadian culture.

You will notice in this ASL storytelling that Kathy does not sign the repeated images on each day of Christmas. For example, on the 2nd day of Christmas she signs the two caribou but not the porcupine in a pine tree. The repetition of the previous images on subsequent days is something done in English not in ASL. Since we know from the Le Clerc Centre's research into reading with deaf children that it is best to **"translate stories using American Sign Language,"** we have chosen to tell this story in ASL in a manner that would be more engaging for the deaf child.



Let's Learn about Language

The illustrations in this story are fun and interesting. The playful antics of each of the characters will keep you and your child turning the pages to see what happens when the next day's gift arrives, like when the sled dogs zoom in and upset the squirrels curling. The illustrator, Werner Zimmerman, takes what can be some intimidating animals in real life and creates playful characters.



It is important book knowledge for children to learn about the role of the author and illustrator. You can point out their names or pictures on the back of the book and describe their jobs. In ASL you would sign **write + person** for author and **art + person** for illustrator. When you add the sign for “person” to a word in ASL, it is like adding “er” or in this case “or” to the word to make it mean “a person who does that action.”

Author



Illustrator



Let's Be Together

Sequencing or learning the order of events is an important early literacy skill. If your child can recall the order that things occurred, it will help him better understand what happened. Cooking together is a good activity to practice sequencing because you follow the steps of a recipe. You can use the language of sequencing too: first, second, third...



Easy Beaver Tails Recipe

(Source: www.todayparent.com/recipe/snacks/beaver-tails/)

- 1 lb (500 g) loaf of frozen bread dough (whole wheat, if you prefer), defrosted
- ¼ cup (50 mL) sugar
- 1 tsp (5 mL) cinnamon
- ¼ cup (50 mL) butter, melted

1. Tear the bread dough into 8 or 10 pieces. On a floured surface, roll each piece into a long, flat, thin beaver-tail shape.
2. Place the beaver tails on a well-greased cookie sheet and brush with melted butter. Let rise for 15 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, mix together the sugar and cinnamon. Sprinkle the beaver tails with the cinnamon-sugar mixture.
4. Bake at 425°F (220°C) for 10 to 12 minutes, until lightly browned on the bottom and bubbling on top.

Let's Learn About Language

Signing Ordinal Numbers

This book gives us practice signing two kinds of numbers: ordinal numbers, numbers that show position, and cardinal numbers or the numbers you would use in counting. For example when Kathy signs the "7th day of Christmas", that's an ordinal number and the gift of "7 sled dogs" is a cardinal number. You will notice they are signed slightly differently.

When you sign the ordinal numbers 1 – 9, you start the same way as you would when you are counting, with your palm facing out. The difference is you give a little twist of the wrist so that the palm then faces in.

For the ordinal numbers 10 and up, it is a little different yet. You sign the number as you normally would then you fingerspell "th" after the number. There is no twist of the wrist.

In the craft activity below, you can get some practice signing both the ordinal and the cardinal numbers in this story.

Let's Create

Sequencing Tree

You will need:

- Tree shape with numbered circles and Velcro dots
- Pictures in circles (see template)
- Velcro dots



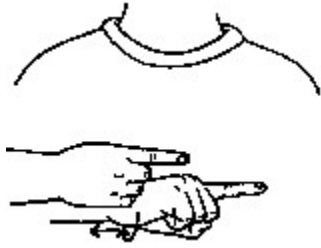
What to do:

1. Colour the pictures of the things for the 12 days of Christmas. Cut out the 12 circles.
2. Put a Velcro dot on the back of each circle.
3. Try to remember the story and match the pictures of the gifts with the day it was given.

You can retell the story in order or mix it up. Below are some signs you might use to play this with your child.

First see you what?

First



see



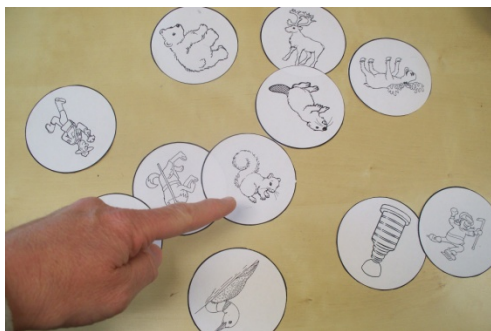
you



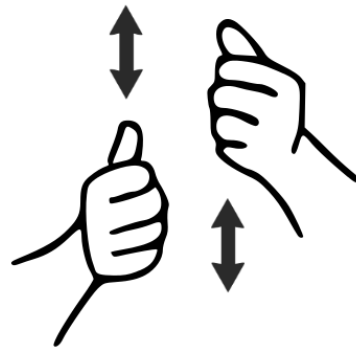
what?



One which?



(point)



which

Once your child picks the gift they think came first, you can hold up your arm as the tree shape and ask them to put it on, like this.

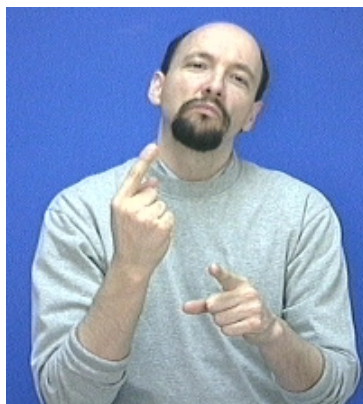


If your child answers “squirrels”, don’t forget to ask **how many?**



Use the book as a reference until you are both familiar with the sequence of things. Give your child lots of praise for correct answers.

That’s right!



Good!



