

THEMATIC UNIT

VALENTINE'S DAY

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Introduction

Valentine's Day contains a captivating whole language, thematic unit. Its 80 exciting pages are filled with a wide variety of lesson ideas and activities designed for use with primary children. At its core are two high-quality children's literature selections, *The Valentine Bears* and *One Zillion Valentines*, and an original, reproducible book, *My Heart Book*. For each of these books, activities are included which set the stage for reading, encourage the enjoyment of the book, and extend the concepts gained. In addition, the theme is connected to the curriculum with activities in language arts (including daily writing suggestions), math, science, social studies, art, music, and life skills. Many of these activities encourage cooperative learning. Furthermore, directions for student-created Big Books and culminating activities, which allow students to synthesize their knowledge in order to produce products that can be shared beyond the classroom, highlight this very complete teacher resource.

The thematic unit includes:

- literature selections**—summaries of two children's books and an original, nonfiction manuscript with related lessons (complete with reproducible pages) that cross the curriculum
- poetry**—suggested selections and lessons enabling students to write and publish their own works
- planning guides**—suggestions for sequencing lessons each day of the unit
- writing and language experience ideas**—daily suggestions as well as writing activities across the curriculum, including Big Books
- bulletin board ideas**—suggestions for student-created and/or interactive bulletin boards
- homework suggestions**—extending the unit to the child's home
- curriculum connections**—in language arts, math, science, social studies, art, music, and life skills
- group projects**—to foster cooperative learning
- a culminating activity**—which requires students to synthesize their learning to produce a product or engage in an activity that can be shared with others
- a bibliography**—suggesting additional literature and nonfiction books on the theme

To keep this valuable resource intact so that it can be used year after year, you may wish to punch holes in the pages and store them in a three-ring binder.

Introduction *(cont.)*

Why Whole Language?

A whole language approach involves children in using all modes of communication: reading, writing, listening, observing, illustrating, experiencing, and doing. Communication skills are interconnected and integrated into lessons that emphasize the whole of language rather than isolating its parts. The lessons revolve around selected literature. Reading is not taught as a separate subject from writing and spelling, for example. A child reads, writes (spelling appropriately for his/her level), speaks, listens, etc. in response to a literature experience introduced by the teacher. In this way, language skills grow naturally, stimulated by involvement and interest in the topic at hand.

Why Thematic Planning?

One very useful tool for implementing an integrated whole language program is thematic planning. By choosing a theme with correlating literature selections for a unit of study, a teacher can plan activities throughout the day that lead to a cohesive, in-depth study of the topic. Students will be practicing and applying their skills in meaningful contexts. Consequently, they will tend to learn and retain more. Both teachers and students will be freed from a day that is broken into unrelated segments of isolated drill and practice.

Why Cooperative Learning?

Besides academic skills and content, students need to learn social skills. No longer can this area of development be taken for granted. Students must learn to work cooperatively in groups in order to function well in modern society. Group activities should be a regular part of school life and teachers should consciously include social objectives as well as academic objectives in their planning. For example, a group working together to write a report may need to select a leader. The teacher should make clear to the students and monitor the qualities of good leader-follower group interaction just as he/she would state and monitor the academic goals of the project.

Why Big Books?

An excellent cooperative, whole language activity is the production of Big Books. Groups of students, or the whole class, can apply their language skills, content knowledge, and creativity to produce a Big Book that can become a part of the classroom library to be read and reread. These books make excellent culminating projects for sharing beyond the classroom with parents, librarians, other classes, etc. Big Books can be produced in many ways and this thematic unit book includes directions for at least one method you may choose.

The Valentine Bears

by Eve Bunting

Summary

Mrs. Bear decides she wants to celebrate Valentine's Day with Mr. Bear, so she sets her alarm to go off on February 14th. Mr. Bear sleeps on as she makes signs, digs up honey, and makes a berry mix. She tries to wake Mr. Bear, but he is not interested in getting up. What happens next is a fun, warm-hearted story of two bears enjoying themselves on Valentine's Day.

The outline below is a suggested plan for using the various activities that are presented in this unit. You should adapt these ideas to fit your own classroom situations.

Sample Plan

Day 1

- Get centers ready. See Overview of Activities on page 8
- Show the cover of *The Valentine Bears* and discuss.
- Read part of the book. See page 9 for details.
- Write bear poetry. (page 12)
- Work Valentine Math Puzzles. (page 13)
- Decorate and send home invitations to Bear Valentine party.
- Learn the song and game "You Are Mine." (page 69)

Day 2

- Introduce song "I Am Making Valentines." (page 70)
- Weave a Bear's Valentine Heart (page 14); sing the song as you work.
- Make a pie graph on the playground. (page 57)
- Make notes for Fortune Cookies. (page 74)
- Play "You Are Mine" again. (page 69)

Day 3

- Work the Crossword Puzzle. (page 51)
- Introduce the Block Bar Graph. (page 16)
- Paint paper plate red for Picture Heart. (page 14)
- Make Fortune Cookies for Bear Party. (page 74)
- Make Bear name tags for dramatization. (page 73)
- Sing "I Am Making Valentines" (pages 70) and introduce Valentines chanting. (page 67)

Day 4

- Complete Hearts in Order. (page 55)
- Have a preview of plays for the Bear Party. (page 73)
- Make Paper Plate Picture Valentines using red plates. (page 14)
- Make Bears and Honey Roll-Up Treats. (page 17)

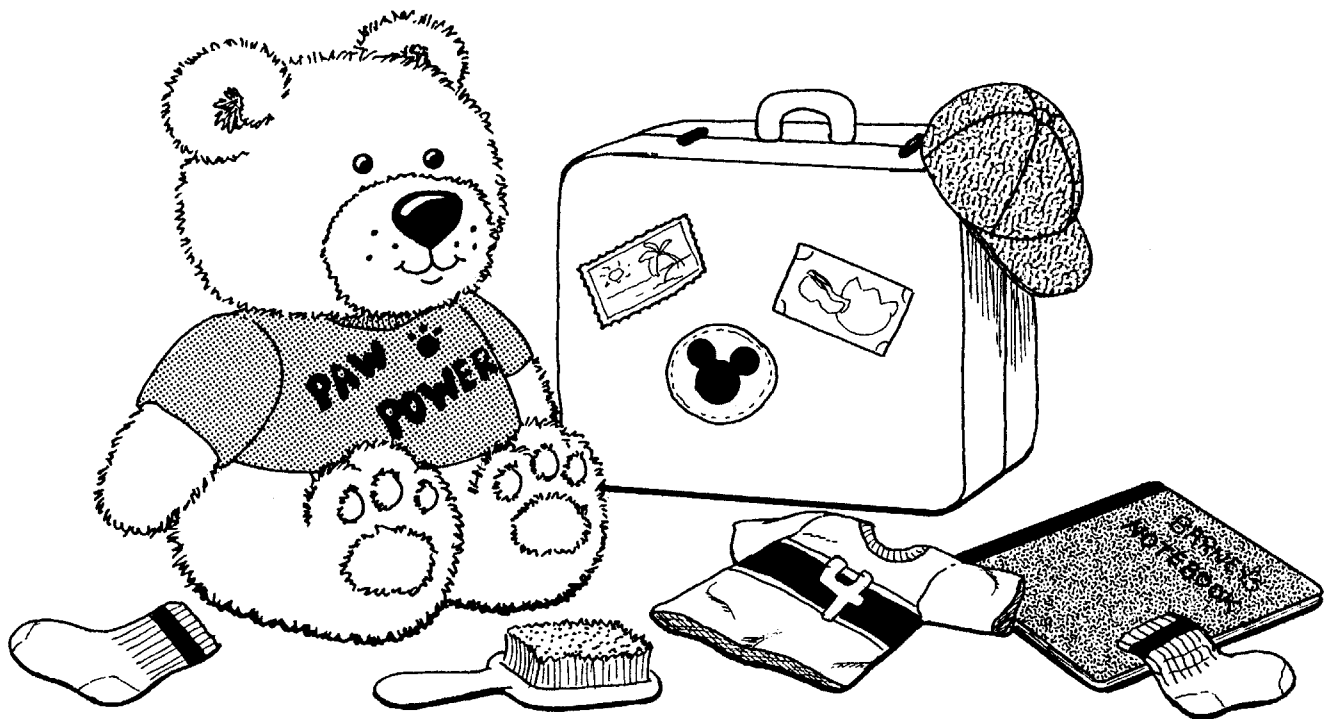
Day 5

- Make Red Punch for guests. (page 74)
- Make a Valentine Window House. (page 15)
- Have the Valentine Bear Party with guests and parents. (page 73)

Overview of Activities

SETTING THE STAGE

1. Collect books about bears for the reading center. See the learning center ideas on page 10 for ideas about starting bear centers.
2. Get ready to start a traveling class bear. Purchase a teddy bear, use one you already have, or ask for a donation from your students. (Garage sales often have inexpensive stuffed animals, if you need to buy one.) Make a cloth or plastic bag or use a suitcase to store the bear. Collect or make clothing that will fit the bear and/or a small comb and brush and toothbrush for the bear. Send home the letter on page 76 to inform parents that the bear will be visiting. Include this same letter in the bear bag, in case parents forget what is happening with this bear. Include a notebook in the bag and encourage children and/or parents to tell about the bear's adventures at their home. See page 11 for a cover for your bear notebook. Introduce the bear to the class and let them vote on a name for this class bear. Explain that the bear will be going home with them overnight and tell them about the notebook. Send the bear home with the children on an overnight check-out basis. When each child brings the bear back to class, read aloud from the notebook the bear's adventures with that child's family.



3. Collect stuffed bears for a special bear display. Ask the children to bring their favorite bear from home. Provide a table for display. Provide note cards, pencils, and crayons so children can write the names of their bears or their own names on cards and place them next to their bears. Or if they would like to make necklace note cards, provide yarn or string, a hole punch, and scissors so they can hang the names on the teddy bears.