

Sharing books...

Monkey Puzzle

by **Julia Donaldson** and **Axel Sheffler** (Macmillan Children's Books, 2000)

While Julia Donaldson is best known for *The Gruffalo*, she has written

many other children's books that are worth sharing with children.

In this book, a baby monkey is looking for his mother. A friendly butterfly takes charge and tries to solve the puzzle of where she might be.

Unfortunately, the baby monkey doesn't give a full description of his mother and so butterfly takes the baby monkey to the wrong animal over and over again. When the baby monkey finally explains that he looks like his mother, the puzzle is nearly solved.

The butterfly quickly finds an adult monkey, but it turns out to be the baby monkey's dad. The story ends with the family reunited.

A GOOD CHOICE

This book can be read with many different ages of children. The publisher suggests an age range of three to seven years, but toddlers will enjoy the illustrations and spotting the animals.

Three- and four-year-olds are likely to enjoy the rhyming text and also remember parts of it. Older children who are starting to read will enjoy being able to pick out some of the key words independently once they are familiar with the text.

SHARING THIS BOOK

While toddlers should share a book with an adult one to one, three- and four-year-olds may enjoy looking at this book in pairs. The illustrations in this book are quite striking and work well alongside the rhyming text.

To get the most out of this story, children will need time to look

again at the illustrations once they have enjoyed the story. There are bugs to find and details, such as the elephant standing on sticks, to notice.

When reading the book, it is also worth emphasising the rhyming text so that as children become familiar with it, they are able to fill in the final words.

Once children are familiar with the text, this is a great book to have out for children to enjoy independently.

SUPPORTING LEARNING

Personal, social and emotional development

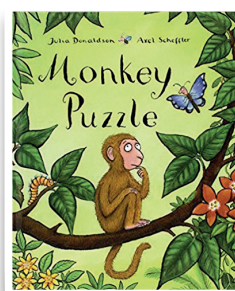
The baby monkey is missing his mother, something many children will have experienced, and they may even have been lost. Talking to children about their experiences may help children learn some vocabulary relating to feelings such as 'worry', 'anxious', 'nervous' and 'scared'.

You can also use this as a learning opportunity to talk about what children should do if ever they were lost and whom to approach for help.

The baby monkey assumed that the butterfly would know babies look like their mothers. With older children, you could look at how easy it is to think that everyone thinks the same as us – for example, 'because I like apples, you must like apples'.

Language development

This is a lovely book to help children learn vocabulary, especially for descriptive words such as 'hairy', 'slimy' and 'baggy'. You could build on this by playing games with children – for example, put out a range of objects or cuddly toys and ask the children



ABOUT THIS SERIES

Over the course of this monthly series on sharing books with children, **Penny Tassoni** will look at a range of fiction and non-fiction titles, from rhyming books for babies to picture books that adults and children can explore together.

to guess which one you are talking about based on your description.

Auditory discrimination

Once children are familiar with this book, check if they can hear the rhymes within the text. You can also choose some words such as 'bat' or 'small' and see how many rhyming words children can think of, or play games where children have to shout out or ring a bell when words that you say do not rhyme.

Mathematics

This book can be used to encourage children to look for particular items and to count them. For example, can they spot the crocodile in the river or the caterpillars on the leaves? Or can they find the smallest and largest animals in the story?

This book could also be the starting point for playing puzzles with children. You could hide a picture of the mother monkey using positional language such as 'next to' or 'under' and encourage the child to find it.

Also look out for jigsaw puzzles featuring some of the animals from the story, such as the elephant or butterfly. Puzzles can develop children's problem-solving skills, as well as their understanding of shape and size.

Understanding the world

Discover more about the animals in the story. With older children, search the internet for information by keying in such questions as 'where do bats live?'.

In the summer, you could also carry out a caterpillar and butterfly hunt and talk to children about their lifecycle. ■

