

LITERACY-RICH ACTIVITIES FOR AT-HOME TIMES

My fourth-grade daughter and I are big fans of Lin-Manuel Miranda and his groundbreaking musical *Hamilton*. We spend many mornings bopping around the kitchen with the soundtrack as the background to our before-school morning frenzy. In March 2020, our usual before-school frenzy came to a screeching halt as the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered schools and shifted our lives entirely online. Suddenly, the *Hamilton* lyrics of “The world turned upside down” felt particularly relevant.

During those long spring days—quarantined with my daughter in a tiny cottage on the coast of Maine—I dipped into some of the ideas provided in this book. My intent was not necessarily to make every minute matter as I became increasingly involved in my child’s education, but rather to spend some time together engaged in easy-to-implement, literacy-rich, screen-free activities. Also, I collaborated with my network of teachers as they incorporated some of these ideas into their digital instruction. We devised ways to make some of the activities doable at home, so families, teachers, and kids can have some fun with literacy . . . at home.

Table 1 includes some of the activities that are instantly ready to try out at home—applicable to parents who are not teachers or literacy experts, and who are armed with little more than paper and markers. In my home, I purchased a huge roll of craft paper (large enough to cover the dining room table) and we use it for many of the activities below. Table 2 outlines ways that teachers might adapt activities for digital platforms.

My hope is that we never have to shutter schools for a pandemic again. Yet we’ve learned how to be prepared for disruptions, whether snow days or water main breaks or whatever comes, and we can help our kids and families stay engaged in literacy learning even when the school building is closed.

TABLE 1 – ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES TO TRY AT HOME

Activity	For More Information, Check out Page #	Hints and/or Creative Twists to Try at Home
Rotate Your Writing	Pp. 22–23	I love the “Once Upon a Story” game version! As your family starts dinner, you might put out paper placemats at each person’s seat, set a quick timer, and have the entire family write!
I Wonder and Parking Lot	Pp. 32–35 and Pp. 82–83	At home, create a Parking Lot on the back of a closet door where you add kids’ questions on sticky notes. Those questions later become fodder for research projects. When my daughter asked, “How fast do sea turtles swim?” while watching <i>Finding Nemo</i> , we added that question to our Parking Lot, and later looked up the answer (23 miles per hour!)
Beach Ball Bonanza	Pp. 36–37	Stuck at home with antsy kids? Take a balloon and create a quick literacy game! Preschoolers and kindergartners might hit the balloon back and forth as they name things starting with a particular letter of the alphabet. My daughter—bummed to be missing the start of her lacrosse season due to COVID-19—and I modified this as we passed the ball in our front yard. Every time we tossed the ball, we had to yell out the name of a character from the <i>Harry Potter</i> series.
Go Fish	Pp. 48–51	Print out the template and create your own version of Go Fish! (Download from resources.corwin.com/everyminutematters)
Hink Pinks	Pp. 70–72	Use the prompts provided in the book and have your older children at home generate their own clues for younger siblings.
Concentration	Pp. 52–53	Use the template for the Go Fish cards; play two different games with one stack of cards! (Download from resources.corwin.com/everyminutematters)

Spelling Connect Four	Pp. 76-77	Download the template from resources.corwin.com/everyminutematters and laminate (or cover using packing tape!) so that you can reuse the same boards over and over.
Vocabulary Vase	Pp. 78-79	Workman Press creates page-a-day calendars. The kids' version is a great source for vocabulary words. Vocabulary Ninja is an app that delivers a new word of the day to a child's device. The app gives the definition of the word of the day, an example sentence, synonyms and antonyms, possible prefixes and suffixes, and a challenge activity to encourage word use.
Sink or Spell	Pp. 84-85	Download the Sink or Spell template from resources.corwin.com/everyminutematters and laminate (or cover using packing tape!) so that you can reuse the same boards over and over.
Headbands	Pp. 88-89	For a fun family dinner, distribute cards to every family member and let dinner conversation be around the questions and clues.
Letter Formation	Pp. 92-93	Challenge your preschooler to use Cheerios to form the letters of their name. Or cover the tile wall of your bathtub with shaving cream and let young children practice their writing.
I Spy	Pp. 56-57	Relatively straightforward, I Spy is a great anytime game—to pass the time at waiting rooms, car trips, etc.
Category Chain and Build a Word	Pp. 58-59 and Pp. 62-63	What parent has not wondered, "Do my kids ever listen to me?" Another relatively straightforward game, both Category Chain and Build a Word make great dinner table games—to encourage active listening.
Would You Rather?	Pp. 68-69	One of my favorite elements of Would You Rather is that the questions allow responses from people of all ages! These sometimes silly, always engaging questions are a great way to start family dinners or kick off FaceTime calls. My daughter has introduced a 'Veto' option—for when both answers are equally as repulsive.
A to Z About	Pp. 102-104	Print out a blank template and let everyone in the family choose their own topic. So if Grandma is an expert gardener, she'd complete a gardening grid—in the same time that a ten-year old Minecraft expert completes his! Download the template from resources.corwin.com/everyminutematters .
Reading Graffiti	Pp. 108-109	Convert a portion of your refrigerator door for readers of all ages to jot down great lines from their texts. Every reader can contribute – even when family members are all reading different books.
Wordoodle	Pp. 112-113	Grab that roll of craft paper, cover the dining room table, and have family members compete to create the best sketch of the target words.
Classroom Charades	Pp. 64-65	Grab some friends or family and set up a Zoom charades game. My fourth grader and I challenged some cross-country friends to a game! Prior to game night, each team jotted down some clues on index cards. Team A would then hold up the clue to one person on Team B (the actor) while the guesser on Team B shielded his/her eyes. A highly competitive digital Charades game ensued!
Categories	Pp. 122-124	After my daughter and I decidedly beat our cross-country friends in our Zoom game night, we played Categories through Zoom. Team A brainstormed the category (e.g. Brands of Cereal), and Team B chose the magic letter (e.g. F). After muting ourselves, Team A and Team B brainstormed as many examples as possible in one minute. Teams read each other their answers, crossed off answers that both teams shared, and awarded a point for original answers plus a bonus point for answers with the magic letter. So Fruit Loops earned us two points—one for originality, and another for the magic letter. You can download Category Card template from resources.corwin.com/everyminutematters .

Classroom Charades	Pp. 64–65	Very little explanation is needed to convert this popular family game into an activity to engage all ages of the family—though I do recommend setting some parameters on acceptable categories to be ensure that all players are familiar with the clues.
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TABLE 2 - ACTIVITIES THAT TEACHERS CAN MODIFY DIGITALLY

Activity	For More Information, Check out Page #	How to Adapt Digitally and / or At Home
Rotate Your Writing	Pp. 22–23	You might use GoogleDocs for students to provide written responses to a prompt. Or you might use Kami to have students record their oral responses.
I Wonder and Parking Lot	Pp. 32–35 and Pp. 82–83	You might use Padlet for students to jot down their questions about a particular topic or reading.
Read, Record, Reflect	Pp. 40 –42	To digitally adapt readings and oral fluency practice, try out See Saw or Kami.
Book Pass	Pp. 80 –81	When schools are closed, it’s even more important to encourage independent reading – and there are lots of digital resources for text (my favorites are Scholastic’s Read-a-palooza and Epic!). You might snapshot the back covers or inside flaps of books and post for kids to decide upon their next read. When my daughter’s fourth-grade teacher needed student input on the class’s next read aloud, she videoed herself book talking the possibilities, and reading a short portion. Students then completed a Google poll to rank their preferences. Or students might use Flipgrid to record quick one-minute reactions to book talks or their own book recommendations.
Classroom Charades	Pp. 64 –65	This can work well using Zoom or Google Hangouts or any other video conference platform.
Would You Rather?	Pp. 68–69	One of the highlights of my daughter’s fourth grade classroom was the daily “Would You Rather?” question that greeted her as she entered the room. Her teacher – eager to include this engaging routine – easily shifted this to a digital format. Students can defend their opinions on Google classroom or Flipgrid.
A to Z About	Pp. 102–104	Using a collaborative writing platform – like Google classroom – create a template for students to complete. For example, after a unit on the American Revolution, my fourth-grader completed a A to Z About.
Reading Graffiti	Pp. 108–109	Use a platform like Padlet for kids to add their favorite reading passages in a virtual capacity.
Categories	Pp. 122–124	This one works well in Zoom or Google Hangouts or any video conference platform.