

The Little Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly By Simms Taback



Do you remember singing the song as a kid? It was fun and made us giggle, but math? Absolutely! The most obvious is sequencing. One critter after another is added to the menu in an attempt to catch the previous one. Eventually, the size of the critters becomes crazy and, as predicted, the poor old lady cannot survive her series of bad decisions.

The idea of limits is also introduced in this book. On the [livingmath.net](http://www.livingmath.net) blog, they discuss how the book goes through a cumulative pattern with limits. After the spider, the animals become too big to swallow. The blog mentions that it helps students understand the idea of limits and that the size of the animals being swallowed is "absurd".

<http://www.livingmath.net/LearningIdeas/JustReadIt/OldLadySwallowedFly/tabid/407/Default.aspx>



Discussion about pretend versus real possibilities are inspired here. Teachers in one of the workshops, where we were sharing our ideas, said that you can have the students actually measure the opening of their mouths and compare it to the size of an average cat, maybe even bring in a stuffed one to measure.

Web Resources



Pattie's classroom blog had the most unique and detailed ideas of using this book in the classroom. One idea that is full of math concepts. She uses the book to launch a lesson on healthy eating. She incorporates the food pyramid. Portion sizes, amount of portions from each category and total portions eaten are just some of the numbers you can connect to math in their real world.

Ok, not exactly math, but how creative! She has a picture of using Mrs. Butterworth bottles to create a little old lady you can see through! Do they even make those anymore? Pancakes anyone?



<http://pattiesclassroom.blogspot.com/2013/12/there-was-old-lady-who-swallowed.html>

Edible Estimation

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/there-was-old-lady>

This website has ideas for all the subject areas. This is the one for math:

Build estimating skills by encouraging kids to guess the total weight of one of the old lady's feasts. Begin by having students estimate the weight of classroom objects. How much does a textbook weigh? A piece of chalk? Students can test their guesses using a scale. Then invite groups of children to write a list of the items eaten in one version of the old lady story. Encourage students to use the classroom objects as a guide to estimate the weight of each item. Add together the guesses to estimate the total weight. How do these totals compare with the average amount Americans eat each day (about five pounds)?



Other Titles with the same idea:

I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a One

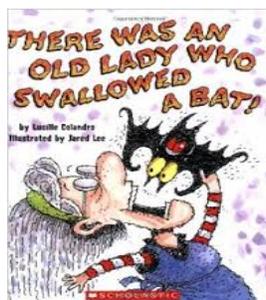
http://www.drjean.org/html/monthly_act/act_2006/06_June-July/pg09.html

This website has a song for the Little Old Lady Who Swallowed a One, then a Two, then a Three, and so on. There is a pattern to create the lady's head and spinning number wheel on the site too.



<http://mathwire.com/seasonal/battyol.pdf>

Batty Old Lady Probability Game PDF with everything you will need, including printable cards and spinners! This idea is a spin off of the book: *There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Bat!* By Lucille Colandro.



Do you have a great resource to share with Oklahoma Teachers that goes along with this book? Consider sharing it with **#OKMath** group on Facebook or as a Twitter Tag.

