

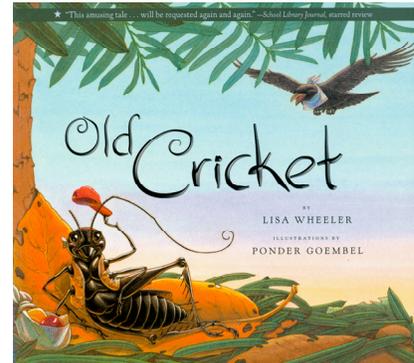
## Ideas and Activities to Use with *Old Cricket*

Written by Lisa Wheeler

Illustrated by Ponder Goembel

Ideas and Activities

Created and Compiled by Karen Antikajian



### Before Reading:

1. Ask the class what they know about crickets. See attached page called **Cricket Facts** and share the basic ones with the class.
2. Look at the cover. What do you think this story is about?
3. Write **cranky, crotchety, cantankerous** on the board in a list. Ask the students if they notice anything about these words. Elicit that they all begin with 'c' and the first two begin with 'cr.' Have the students make the sound of 'cr.' Can anyone find that same sound in the third word? Have students notice the 'ker' in the third syllable. Introduce or review alliteration (where two or more words close together have the same beginning sound (or sometimes the beginning of a syllable). Emphasize that it is the sound not always the letter that is the same (in this case 'c' and 'k' have the same sound). Ask students to listen for words that have the same beginning sound and raise your hand if you think you hear them.

### During Reading:

4. Acknowledge any correct noticing of alliteration with just a nod, smile, or thumbs up. Do not interrupt the story to discuss or list the alliterative words.
5. When you get to the part when Uncle Ant asks Old Cricket if he has come to help, stop and have the class predict what is going to happen. See if they can decide what kind of excuse Old Cricket is going to offer this time.
6. When you reach the part with Old Crow, ask if they think Old Crow will go along with Old Cricket's excuse of hiccups. Why or why not?
7. At the end, ask if students were satisfied with the ending. Why or why not? List reasons on the board. Talk about what makes a satisfying ending to a story.

### After Reading:

8. Write these expressions on the board:
  - a. "You don't get to be an Old Cricket by being a dumb bug" and
  - b. "You don't get to be an Old Crow by being a birdbrain."Ask students what these expressions mean. Talk about expressions or idioms. See if they can list some other idioms. An excellent source of expressions involving animals is the book *There's a Frog in My Throat* by Loreen Leedy. Others are listed on the **Related Books** page.
9. Share the book *SuperSilly Sayings That are Over Your Head* by Catherine Snodgrass. It has the idiom listed with the meaning next to it. On the facing page it shows a literal illustration of the idiom with an illustration of the actual meaning next to it. Let each student choose an expression or idiom. Have them split the page and illustrate it in the same way with the idiom written under the literal drawing and the definition written under the meaning illustration.

10. Review the definition of alliteration. Reread parts of the story and point out some of these: ready their roof - bundled a bit of breakfast - Cousin Katydid - berry in his bundle with his breakfast - bulging bundle - Old Crow caught the kernel, but kept on coming – *caw-caw* coughing sound – that crumb had caught – flurry of feathers. There are also many, many words beginning with the hard ‘c’ sound.
11. Share another alliterative book that focuses on the sound of ‘c’ called *Clara Caterpillar* by Pamela Duncan Edwards. Students may enjoy performing the Readers Theater version of this book included in this packet. Some students could perform this while others perform *How the Moon Regained Her Shape* (included with the pages for that book).
12. Read *A My Name is Alice* by Jane Bayer and have students complete the attached student page that goes with this book.
13. Introduce or review another writing technique—the use of a series of 3’s. This can be just three words in a row such as *creak-creak-creak*, three words in a row that are alliterative and mean the same thing such as *cranky, crotchety, and cantankerous* or three actions such as *Old Cricket reached into his bundle, pulled out the corn kernel, and tossed it*. Three’s can be used for three events, three supporting characters, or three similar actions (tossing the corn kernel, berry, and crumb). Encourage students to notice this technique whenever they are reading (it is used frequently) and try and incorporate it in their own writing.
14. Ask the class, “What does cricket start with? Does the word ‘crick’ sound like the sound a cricket makes? When a word imitates a sound, we call that onomatopoeia. Let’s have some fun with it now.” Reread the story. Make large cards with the following: (1) CREAK-CKEAK-CKEAK, (2) CRICK-CRICK-CRICK, (3) CRACK-CRACK-CRACK, (4) HIC-HIC-HIC, (5) CAW-CAW-CAW and (6) CAW - WHACK - THWICK. Separate the class into five or six groups. Have each group practice saying its part with as much expression as possible. As you read the story, cue each group to come in at the appropriate time. If you have six groups, the last group will read each word on its card at different times. If you have five groups, the whole class can read the sixth card. Variation: Post the cards on the board or wall with a big number on each. Then you can cue by holding up the correct number of fingers rather than a card. Toward the end of the story, you will need to be quite facile with the cards in order to get them all up in time.
15. Let the students fill in the sheet called **Comedy, Catastrophe, and Comeuppance** to review the events in the story.
16. Use a story map to show how the events in the story take place and how the story is organized. (Some examples of maps are included at the end of the packet.) Students might decide that the roof fixing is the problem and that getting chased by Old Crow is the third event, but others might decide that a bigger problem is getting chased by Old Crow and the events should be Old Cricket’s interactions with Cousin Katydid, Uncle Ant, and Old Crow. Either is acceptable. Old Cricket’s interactions with his wife can be considered the beginning and the ending of the story.
17. Let the students draw a map of Old Cricket’s travels with scenes along the way showing the events. They can mark places in the path where Old Cricket encountered other animals and add an illustration to the side to show what happened.
18. Share some other “trickster” tales with the students such as those written by Gerald McDermott, the Anansi tales, or others on the list of related books. Make a list of the characteristics of a trickster and how he tries to fool others. Have the students write a trickster tale of their own by deciding who their character will be: personality characteristics, what he or she wants, and what tricks he or she will play. How is the

trickster going to be fooled in the end? Students may want to use the **Story Planning Sheet**.

19. Share some stories and poems that begin with “If I were . . .” or “I wish I were . . .” such as *If I Were a Cricket* by Kazue Mizumura. Ask the students to think of an insect or animal that they would like to be and what would be interesting about being that insect/animal. They can write a free-verse poem or a short story about what they would like and what they could do.
20. Reread the last three pages of *Old Cricket*. Talk about the phrase “his missus was waiting with a crook in her finger. . . .” What does it mean? What other meanings are there for the word **crook**? (Notice also how **crook** fits in with **creak**, **crick**, and **crack**.) Talk about homonyms (which include homophones and homographs). See if the students can think of some others. Share a book of homonyms such as *Eye Spy* or *Eye Count* by Linda Bourke. Have the students illustrate homonyms either similar to the page **Examples of Homonym Illustrations** that show both meaning in one drawing or by dividing the paper in half to show a different meaning (and perhaps spelling) on each side.
21. Read the story included in this packet entitled “Cricket and Cougar.” Fill out the character Comparison sheet or the story comparison sheet. Some students might want to act out this story for the class.
22. What advice might the students give to Mrs. Cricket so that her husband doesn’t try to trick her next time? Have some students write to an advice column as if they were Mrs. Cricket complaining about Old Cricket. Have the other students reply to these letters with some advice. Share with the whole class.  
Variation: Put all the letters requesting advice into one container and all of the answers into another. Randomly pick a request and read it aloud. Then pick a random answer and read it aloud. Some will not make sense, but some will be very funny.
23. Create a trial for Old Cricket. Decide what crime he is to be charged with (deceiving others?). Bring each character to the stand to complain about Old Cricket (wouldn’t fix roof wouldn’t help others, took food and threw it away, tricked Old Crow out of a meal, , etc). Let Old Cricket try to defend himself. Let the judge decide what the punishment will be.
24. Give students some information about the author and illustrator. Compare other books that the two have collaborated on.
25. Read Lisa Wheeler’s poem, “The W Dilemma,” from **Getting to Know Lisa Wheeler**. How do the students feel about their names and where they are placed alphabetically? Do the “A’s” like always being first and the Z’s last? How about those always in the middle no matter whether you start at the beginning or end of the alphabet? List some preferences and complaints. Write a class poem or let students write individual non-rhyming poems.
26. Read Lisa Wheeler’s list of favorites. Have students each compile a list of favorites. They don’t have to be the same ones. See if they can elaborate the way Lisa did. Post or share orally. Students can illustrate one or more before sharing.
27. The author and illustrator both have interesting websites: [www.lisawheelerbooks.com](http://www.lisawheelerbooks.com) and [www.pondergoembel.com](http://www.pondergoembel.com).
28. Choose some of the additional activities from the Multiple Intelligence Projects developed by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer and posted on Lisa Wheeler’s website (included in this packet).