

The Turnip by Jan Brett



Overview

The teacher will read *The Turnip* by Jan Brett. In this book a badger family and their friends, Hedgie, Mr. Ram and Vanya (the horse) struggle to pull up a giant turnip. A cocky rooster steps in and pulls, sending him into the air, holding onto the turnip. No one knows that a mother bear in her underground den has kicked the turnip up through the soil to give the family room to sleep through the winter. Why did everyone think the rooster pull up the turnip? Afterwards, Mother Badger makes pancakes with the turnip. Use the visual to make MotherBadger's Pancakes.

Georgia Standards

- ELAGSE1SL2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- ELAGSE2RL3: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
- ELAGSE1RI7: Use illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.

Objectives

- Students will be able to answer questions about the book read aloud to them.
- Students will be able to tell what really caused the turnip to come out of the ground.
- Students will be able to use the visuals and the steps in the recipe to make Turnip Pancakes.

Materials

- From the grocery store: 2 – 3 turnips, 3 eggs, onion, plain flour, salt, oil/butter
- From a mobile kitchen cart: grater/shredder, spoons, bowls, conduction pan or electric skillet
- From the classroom: *The Turnip*, [Turnip Pancakes Recipe](#)

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Lesson Plan



Engage:

- Teacher will read Jan Brett's *The Turnip* to students.
- Teacher shows the students 2 whole turnips.
- Try to bring a purple top turnip with both the top (greens) and bottom (root) since it is the purple top is the one shown in the book. Purple top turnips get their names because of their color gradient: the white part on the bottom of the turnip grows below the ground while the purple part on top sticks out.
- Both the greens on the top and the turnip root can be eaten. Discuss how you would eat the greens? Discuss how you would eat the root? Has any of the students heard of turnip pancakes?

Explore:

- Show the students a 4-sided food grater. Discuss the different sides and the uses for them.
- Discuss safety when using the grater. For most students
- you will want to guide them to keep fingers away from sharp edges.

Explain:

- Jan Brett was inspired to write *The Turnip* after a trip to Russia. Found on the inside of the book jacket and also on www.janbrett.com: In 2011, my husband, Joe, and I traveled to Russia. We were driving by a rural farm one day when I was reminded of a gift from a friend. It was a simple carved wooden toy of three people and a bear struggling to pull up a large turnip. The idea of finding a giant turnip really tickled my fancy, and I couldn't stop thinking about it. How could I make my story different from the old Russian tale? I decided to use animal characters. I modeled the badger family after the European badger, with its striking coat and mischievous expression. They were the first to tackle the giant turnip. Other animals would try, but it was the bear in the carved toy that gave me the surprise twist for getting the turnip out of the ground. As I started to write, I had one last thought. Would readers believe a turnip could be as big as I wanted to make it? I knew someone who grew large pumpkins. Some were over nine hundred pounds. "It could happen," I said to myself. ~Jan Brett
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnftzmtmdW4> Video from Hudson Library with Jan Brett explaining about writing and showing the book. Skip to 2:30 in the video.
- Mother Badger uses a wedge of the huge turnip to make her Turnip Pancakes. Show the recipe and visual for making the zucchini pancakes. Make the zucchini pancakes with the students.

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Extend:

- Badger Girl mentions Turnip Soup and Turnip Pie when she finds the turnip. Research and make these recipes with students.
- Compare and contrast Jan Brett's version of The Turnip with other versions of this folktale.
- On the left panel of each page, a wordless story unfolds in series of turnip-shaped illustrations. The bear family is getting ready to hibernate for the winter in what seems to be a completely separate story. Draw the students' attention to these pictures. Understanding the bears are doing in this little story on the side will help the surprise ending make sense for the students. Extend by writing a story about the bears finding this turnip in their den.

Evaluate:

- Did the students ask and answer questions about details in the book read aloud or information presented with the recipe?
- Could the students tell what challenge was faced in the story? Could the students tell the real reason why the turnip came out of the ground?
- Were the students able to use the visual to make the recipe?

Lesson created by Diana Cole for Georgia Organics