

# Blueberries for Sal

by Robert McCloskey

(VIKING, 1948)



In this Caldecott Honor book, Little Sal and her mother are picking blueberries. As Little Sal drops blueberries into her tin pail and counts the sounds they make—"kuplink, kuplank, kuplunk!"—she meanders away from her mother and ends up trailing a mother bear. At the same time, the bear cub absentmindedly begins trailing Sal's mother. A comedy of errors ensues as each little one follows the wrong mother.

## Before Reading



Math is always more meaningful when connected to everyday life; therefore it is mathematically important that students see the connections between their own lives and the math concepts they're learning. Explain that examples of math are found everywhere, and adults often use math in their daily lives without even thinking about it. Ask children to think of a time they have used math in their daily life, and share times you regularly use math in yours. As you get ready to read aloud *Blueberries for Sal*, ask students to listen carefully to see if they can find examples of math in the story.

## After Reading



Your students will delight in the antics of this book, as Little Sal and Little Bear follow the wrong mothers. Research supports facilitating making connections in children's reading because it is what good readers do, and because it is essential for comprehension. Encourage children to make their own connections to the text by relating what happens to their lives. Ask:

- ☉ How do you think Little Sal's mother felt when she discovered a bear instead of her child following her? (Repeat with Little Bear's mother.)
- ☉ How do you think Little Bear felt? (Repeat with Little Sal.)
- ☉ How would you feel if you discovered you were following a bear around instead of the person taking care of you? How do you think the bear might react?

## Meeting the Math Standards

### Number and Operations

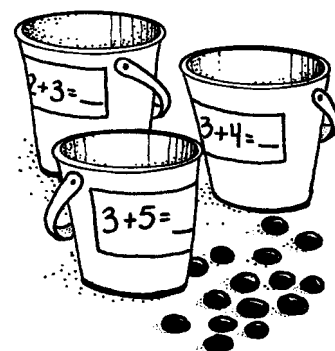
- ◆ Computation
- ◆ Adding and subtracting
- ◆ Using objects to compute; using mental computation

# Tip

The small plastic baskets used for berries in most supermarkets work great for sorting activities and for use with activities such as *Gone Blueberry Pickin'*. Small pails are available from Oriental Trading Company (orientaltrading.com; 800-228-2269).

## Gone Blueberry Pickin'

Invite students to go blueberry picking with this fun adding and counting activity that also works great as an independent math center activity. You will need several small pails (or baskets; see Tip, left) and dried beans painted blue to resemble blueberries. (Save the beans for use with other activities in this section.)

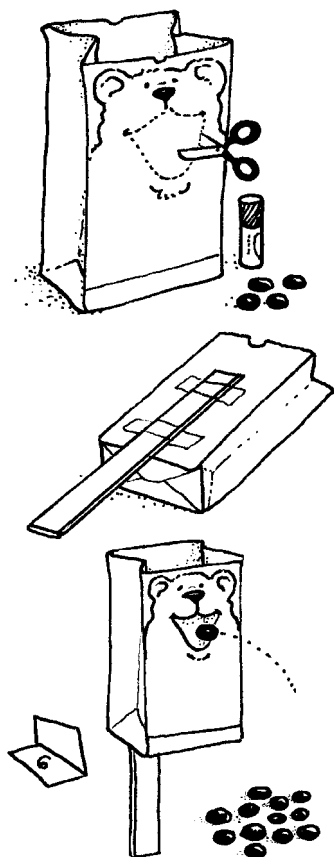


1. Label the front of each pail with a numeral (for younger children) or a number sentence such as  $3 + 4 = \underline{\quad}$  (for older children).
2. With students working in pairs, invite them to fill the pails with the correct number of blueberries, based on the numeral or number sentence. You might provide ten-frames for assistance with one-to-one correspondence and counting.

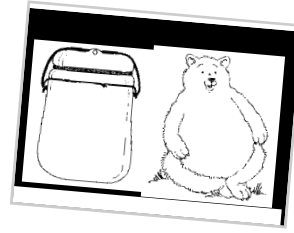
## A Tremendous Mouthful!

Little Bear tastes a “tremendous mouthful” of blueberries from Little Sal’s mother’s pail. How much is a “tremendous mouthful”? Does it mean the same to everyone? In this activity, students experiment with “mouthfuls” as they estimate what a tremendous mouthful might mean to their math partner, and then find the difference between their estimate and their partner’s.

1. Enlarge the bear pattern (page 10) and give each child a copy. Invite children to color and cut out their bear and glue it to the front of a brown paper lunch sack, positioning the bear pattern as shown (left). Help children cut out an opening for the mouth of the bear, cutting through both the pattern and the paper bag. Have children tape a ruler (or other handle) to the back of the puppet.
2. Have children pair up. Give each pair some blueberries from *Gone Blueberry Pickin'* (above).
3. Have partners take turns secretly choosing a number (from 1–10, or any set you choose) and writing it on a sheet of paper. This number represents the number of blueberries in a mouthful for Little Bear. The child who chose the number holds up his or her Little Bear puppet, and the other child places blueberries in the bear’s mouth, trying to match the partner’s number.
4. Children count the blueberries in the bag to determine the difference between that and the number on the paper.



## Storing Blueberries



The blueberries Sal and her mother picked were divided between canning for the winter, and feeding hungry tummies. In this activity children re-create their experience with math mats and blueberry counters to practice addition and subtraction skills.

1. Give each child a copy of the Storing Blueberries math mat (page 10). Each child will also need a handful of counters. The painted dried bean blueberries (page 8) work well.
2. Share a story problem based on the story—for example: “Little Sal’s mom canned five blueberries, and Little Bear’s mom stored four berries in her tummy!” As you share the story, use an overhead to model placement of the counters on the mat, placing five counters on the canning jar and four counters on the bear’s tummy. Have children follow along using their own math mats. Then ask: “Who stored more? How many did they store all together? How many more berries did Little Sal’s mom store than Little Bear’s mom?” Write number sentences to go with each question (for example,  $5 + 4 = 9$ ) to show how many berries they stored all together.
3. Share new stories. Invite students to write number sentences to explain the berries on each math mat story.

## “Kuplink, Kuplank, Kuplunk!”

As Little Sal picks berries, she drops them into her pail, “Kuplink, kuplank, kuplunk!” The sound of the berries hitting the bottom of the empty pail helps her count the berries. Students can strengthen their counting skills as well as their auditory discrimination skills with this berry-picking adventure.

1. Use colorful electrical tape to divide a cookie sheet into ten sections. Make two rows of five boxes each to create a ten-frame.
2. Turn the cookie sheet toward you, hiding it from children. Ask children to get ready to listen and count as you place “berries” (small magnets) in the “bucket.” Place two or three magnets on the frame in order, one in the first box, one in the second, and so on. Invite children to listen to and count the sound of the magnets hitting the cookie sheet. Have students call out how many or hold up the number of fingers that match the number of magnets placed on the cookie sheet.
3. Show the cookie sheet to students, and have them count the magnets to check their responses. Repeat the activity for different numbers.

## Book Links



For more literature that reinforces number sense and addition and subtraction skills, try these selections:

***Counting Our Way to Maine***  
by Maggie Smith  
(Orchard Books, 1995)

For more fun in the blueberry state, read this rollicking tale of a family’s vacation to Maine, beginning with packing one baby and ending with catching 20 fireflies.

***One Watermelon Seed***  
by Celia Barker Lottridge  
(Oxford University Press, 1990)

While Max and Josephine plant and harvest their garden, they find many opportunities to count by ones and tens.

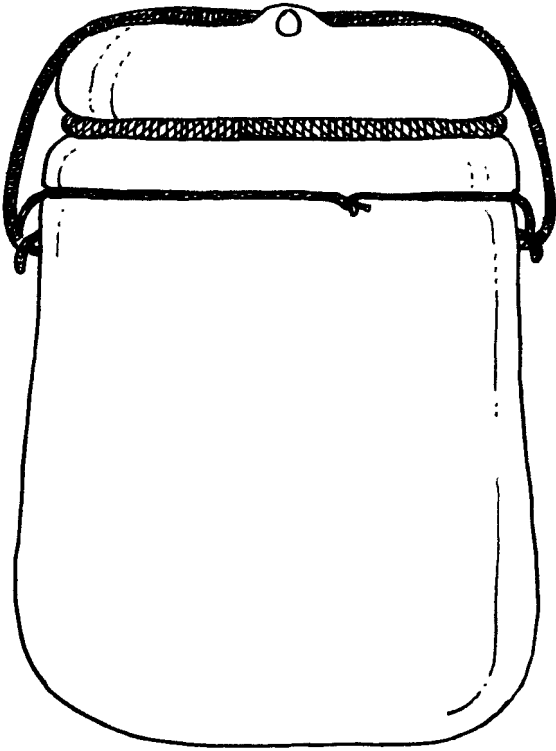
***Reese’s Pieces Count by Fives***  
by Jerry Pallotta  
(Scholastic, 2000)

This colorful book is filled with delicious opportunities to practice one-to-one correspondence and counting by fives.

***Ten Red Apples***  
by Pat Hutchins  
(HarperCollins, 2000)

The concept of subtraction is reinforced as animals eat apples off a tree until the farmer is left with no apples.

## Storing Blueberries



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## A Tremendous Mouthful!

