



The Carrot Seed

by Ruth Krauss

Teacher's Guide

Written By Linda Crosswhite



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FAVORITES

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Synopsis

The Carrot Seed is a step-by-step picture book about a small boy who plants a carrot seed and patiently waits for it to grow. Although the members of his family are pessimistic about the possibility of the carrot growing, the little boy continues to tend the plant. His hope and care finally result in the production of an extraordinary carrot!

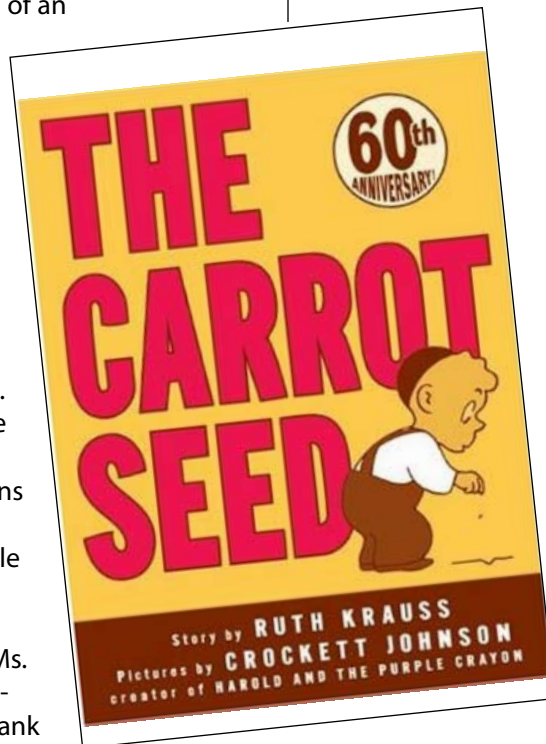
Author Sketch

Ruth Krauss (1911-1993) was born, in Baltimore, Maryland. Growing up before the invention of television, Ruth was read to frequently by her father and grandfather, and became an avid reader herself. She began writing stories as a child, as well as drawing and making things. She attended the Peabody Institute of Music and Maryland Institute of Art, and was graduated from Parsons School of Fine and Applied Art. In 1941, she married the notable illustrator Crockett Johnson (with whom she collaborated on many books, including *The Carrot Seed*). Ms. Krauss was a member of the experimental Writer's Laboratory at the Bank Street School in New York City in the 1940s; beginning in 1944, she devoted her career to writing books for children and poem-plays for adults, collaborating with some of the most celebrated illustrators of her time, including her own husband and famed author/illustrator Maurice Sendak. Krauss' husband, Crockett Johnson, illustrated many of her books, including *The Carrot Seed*. Recognized in *Book Week* and *Children's Catalog*, *The Carrot Seed* has been a favorite children's book since its publication in 1945. Krauss' *The Happy Day* and *A Very Special House* are Caldecott Medal honor books. She lived in Westport, Connecticut, until her death.

Critic's Corner

Published continuously since its debut in 1945, *The*

Carrot Seed is a classic of children's literature and is regarded by many as a parable of faith, as the little boy persists in caring for his project despite the doubts and fears of those around him. *The Carrot Seed* is often referred to as "the little book with the big idea." *Beliefnet* has said of the book, "Young readers will learn the values of conviction and faith in this warm children's tale."



Timeline

- Beginning** A little boy, full of hope and faith, plants a carrot seed.
- Middle** Many family members express pessimism about the carrot seed's prospects. The boy, however, continues to tend the plant, knowing in his heart that it will grow.
- End** The boy's faith is rewarded—the carrot seed (as the little boy knew it would) has transformed into a huge carrot, so big the boy needs a wheelbarrow to transport it.
- Finally** The boy and his giant carrot win a prize at the state fair.

Themes and Motifs

- changes
- growth
- gardens
- plants
- vegetables
- persistence

Skills and Objectives

- Identifying basic sight words
- Sequencing events in a story
- Recognizing story structure

Selected Other Works by Ruth Krauss

A Good Man and His Good Wife, illus. by Ad Reinhardt (1944); re-illus. by Marc Simont (1962).
The Carrot Seed, illus. by Crockett Johnson (1945).
The Great Duffy, illus. by Mischa Richter (1946).
The Growing Story, illus. by Phyllis Rowand (1947).
Bears, illus. by Phyllis Rowand (1948); re-illus. by Maurice Sendak (2005).
The Happy Day, illus. by Marc Simont (1949).
The Big World and the Little House, illus. by Marc Simont (1949).
The Backward Day, illus. by Marc Simont (1950).
I Can Fly, illus. by Mary Blair (1950).
The Bundle Book, illus. by Helen Stone (1951).
A Hole is to Dig: A First Book of First Definitions, illus. by Maurice Sendak (1952).
A Very Special House, illus. by Maurice Sendak (1953).
I'll Be You and You Be Me, illus. by Maurice Sendak (1954).
How To Make An Earthquake, illus. by Crockett Johnson (1954).
Charlotte and the White Horse, illus. by Maurice Sendak (1955).
Is This You? by Krauss and Crockett Johnson (1955).
I Want to Paint My Bathroom Blue, illus. by Maurice Sendak (1956).
Monkey Day, illus. by Phyllis Rowand (1957).
The Birthday Party, illus. by Maurice Sendak (1957).
Somebody Else's Nut Tree, and Other Tales from Children, illus. by Maurice Sendak (1958).
A Moon or a Button: A Collection of First Picture Ideas, illus. by Remy Charlip (1959).
Open House for Butterflies, illus. by Maurice Sendak (1960).
Mama, I Wish I Was Snow; Child You'd Be Very Cold, illus. by Ellen Raskin (1962).
A Bouquet of Littles, illus. Jane Flora (1963).

Eyes, Nose, Fingers, Toes, illus. by Elizabeth Schneider (1964).
The Cantilever Rainbow, illus. by Antonio Frasconi (1965).
What a Fine Day for ..., illus. Remy Charlip; music by Al Carmines (1967).
The Happy Egg, illus. by Crockett Johnson (1967).
This Thumbprint: Words and Thumbprints (1967).
The Little King, the Little Queen, the Little Monster and Other Stories You Can Make Up Yourself (1968).
There's A Little Ambiguity Among the Bluebells and Other Theater Poems (1968).
If Only (1969).
I Write It, illus. by Mary Chalmers (1970).
Under Twenty (1970).
Everything Under a Mushroom, illus. by Margot Tomes (1973).
This Breast Gothic (1973).
Love and the Invention of Punctuation (1973).
Little Boat Lighter Than a Cork, illus. by Ester Gilman (1976).
Under Thirteen (1976).
When I Walk I Change the Earth (1978).
Somebody Spilled the Sky, illus. by Eleanor Hazard (1979).
Minnestrone (1981).
Re-examination of Freedom (1981).
Love Poems for Children (1986).
Big and Little, illus. by Mary Szilagyi (1987).

Bibliography

"Ruth Krauss Teacher Resource File," <
<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/krauss.htm>>
"Ruth Krauss biography,"
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruth_Krauss>
"The Carrot Seed,"
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Carrot_Seed>

Related Reading

Carle, Eric, *Tiny Seed*
Cristini, Ermanno, *In My Garden*
Ehlert, Lois, *Growing Vegetable Soup*
Planting a Rainbow
Foster, John, *Seed Poems*
Fustec, Fabienne, *Plants*
Gibbons, Gail, *From Seed to Plant*
Jordan, Helene, *How a Seed Grows*
Krauss, Ruth, *Happy Day*
A Hole Is to Dig
Kuchalla, Susan, *All About Seeds*
Ray, Mary Lyn, *Pumpkin, Pumpkin*
Reich, Janet, *Gus and the Green Thing*
Stobbs, William, *Gregory's Garden*

Taylor, Barbara, *Green Thumbs Up! The Science of Growing Plants*

Meaning Study

The following suggested plans and activities can be used with this book. You may choose to select and modify these to best meet the needs and interests of your students.

INITIATING THE READING EXPERIENCE

Building the background

1. Brainstorm the concept of “seeds” with the students to determine their prior knowledge. This may be webbed in the following manner:
2. Bring in a bundle of carrots (tops included). Let the children experience these by using their five senses. Lead a discussion to complete a chart listing the children’s observations about carrots. Use the following categories: See, Hear, Smell, Feel, Taste. List student responses next to the appropriate sense being described. This chart can be posted for further reference.

Introducing the book

Present the book to the students. Have the students look at the cover and identify the title, author and illustrator. As the students observe the cover, generate responses concerning the character, setting, and story content. Have the children predict what they think will happen in the story. Draw a chart listing “What we think will happen.” Then, after reading the story, write “yes” or “know” under the column titled, “Did it happen?”

ENJOYING THE READING

Prereading: Setting the purpose for reading

Have the children read to confirm their predictions and complete the above chart by checking the appropriate Yes or No column.

Post Reading: Confirming, analyzing, synthesizing or evaluating the reading

1. Encourage the children to share their feelings about the story.
2. Initiate a small group or whole class discussion of the story. Some of the following questions may help to start and/or guide this process:
 - Why did the little boy’s family think the carrot would not grow?
 - What did the little boy do to help the carrot seed grow?
 - How long do you think it took for the carrot to grow?
 - Have you ever had to wait for something to happen?

Tell us about it.

- Why is it important to be patient?

TEACHING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES IN CONTEXT

Identifying basic sight words

Focus on sight words to encourage memory of the basic sight word vocabulary after the students have become familiar with the story.

Choose sight words that you wish to reinforce. Write these on individual 3 inch-by-5 inch cards. Students can take turns matching these word cards to the words in the text. As they do so, discuss some of the following characteristics of specific words:

1. the number of letters in the word;
2. where the word is used in the sentence; and
3. what letters are at the beginning and/or end of the word.

Sequencing events in a story

Write each sentence of the story on a sentence strip. After reading the story several times, have the students put the sentence strips in the correct sequential order. (A pocket chart works well for this.) The students can refer back to the text to self-correct this activity. Example:

A little boy planted a carrot seed.

His mother said, “I’m afraid it won’t come up.”

His father said, “I’m afraid it won’t come up.”

Recognizing story structure

Review the story with the students. Create a story elements chart with the following categories:

Title:
Author:
Setting:
Characters:
Problem:
Solution:

This may be completed as a group or individually.

Across the Curriculum

The following activities may be introduced after each section of the story or the entire book, integrated into the appropriate content areas or used as learning center activities.

Writing

1. Use the following story pattern to have the children

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write a group story (this can be written on chart paper and made into a big book for the class):

A little boy _____.
Mother said, " _____."
Father said, " _____."
Big brother said, " _____."
Everyday the little boy _____.
But _____.
And _____.
Everyone kept saying _____.
But _____.
And then, one day, _____,
just as the little boy had known it would.

2. Initiate a discussion of how seeds are planted. Assist the children in creating a chart that lists the directions for planting seeds. (This can be completed after Science Activity 1.)
3. Have the students write an acrostic poem choosing from the following list of words and then filling in with words that reflect something about the main word (carrot, seed, grow, plants, garden, food, etc.). Examples:

G rowing	P eas
A sparagus	L ettuce
R adishes	A pple
D igging	N ectarine
E ggplant	T omato
N urturing	S pinach

Math

1. Bring in several bunches or packages of carrots. Supply various measurement tools. Have the students measure the carrots and record their findings. This activity can be extended by having the children categorize the~ carrots by size.
2. Use packages of seeds to have students count the seeds contained in each package. The number of seeds in each packet can be recorded on a chart to compare the amount of seeds contained in the various packets. Example:

Seed Packet	Number of Seeds
carrot	
radish	
bean	
squash	
pumpkin	

Social Studies

1. Initiate a discussion of how we can support family members and friends as they work on projects,

- participate in activities and deal with their problems.
2. Read to the students *The Little Engine That Could*. Initiate a discussion about the importance of persistence. Help the students recognize the similarities between the main character in each story. Have the students give examples of times they continued to try until they reached their goal, then make a list. Examples could include:

Tying my shoes
Riding my bike
Roller-skating
Making my bed

Science

1. Bring in a carrot top with the leaves removed. Place it in a shallow dish of water. Have the students observe how it grows.
2. Talk about various vegetables. Bring in seeds for the children to plant in plastic glasses. Have the students fill plastic glasses with potting soil and plant some seeds in the middle and some near the edge of the glass. Discuss how seeds grow. Have each of the students take the responsibility of caring for his/her plant. The growth of the plants can be recorded in a learning log or graphed on a chart.
3. Bring in various vegetable and flower seed packets. Have the students classify these according to type (e.g., vegetables: carrots, peas, green beans, etc.; flowers: zinnias, marigolds, violets).

Art

1. Have the students make seed pictures. Supply the students with various kinds of seeds, white glue and assorted colors of 9 inch-by-12 inch construction paper for this art experience. Have the students glue the seeds onto the colored paper in the form of a flower.
2. Supply the students with seed catalogs, magazines and newspapers containing pictures of fruits, vegetables, and flowers. Have the students cut out pictures to make collages of "things that grow from seeds." This can be done as an individual project or a group activity.
3. Show the students the picture on the last page of the book so they can observe that this carrot is about the same size as the boy. Give the students an opportunity to make a giant sized carrot on large sheets of butcher paper. These may be cut out and painted or colored. Have the students compare these large carrots to the size of a real carrot.

Music

Teach the children the song, "Oats, Peas, Beans and Barley Grow." After the students have learned the song, assist them in writing another verse to include carrots and other vegetables.

Drama

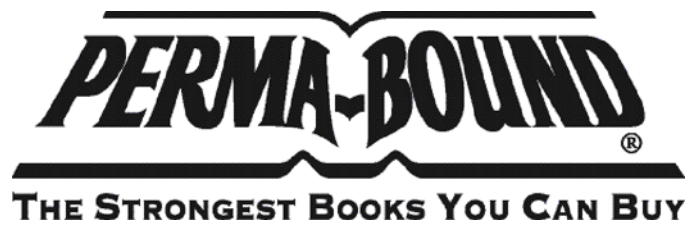
1. Give the students an opportunity to act out the story.
Supply simple props for this event.
2. Have the students dramatize the following activities:
 - Plant a garden: dig the hole, plant the seeds, water the seeds, and weed the garden.
 - Grow from a seed into a plant.

EVALUATING THE READING EXPERIENCE

- Keep a teacher's journal of those strategies that helped the students understand the story.
- Make a note of the activities which best helped the students internalize the story.
- Record the students' responses as they briefly retell or dramatize the story.
- Collect student's projects to evaluate.
- Select a short section of the story to read to the students. Have the students write the words as you read them. Use these to evaluate letter-sound relationships, conventions of print and sight word vocabulary.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

Have the students write a story about their experience with plants. This can be a group or individual project. Make copies of these for the children to illustrate. After these are completed, the children can take them home to share with their families.



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