Integrating Literature and Math

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Purpose
The purpose of this article is to show a way of integrating literature and math to teach mathematical concepts to school age children.

The Article
The article begins with Carolyn, a first grade teacher, and her love of literature and desire to use literature in math class. Story books provide opportunities to study math in ways that reveal children’s own experiences and curiosities and to discuss math in a “natural context.” It is vital that a teacher be selective in choosing a story book to be used in a math lesson so that students will gain new mathematical skills where they clearly make connections between the story context and the mathematical concepts in the lesson. Carolyn used The Doorbell Rang to teach a mathematical lesson to her first graders. Her goal in the lesson was for her students to develop number sense. She wanted her students to see connections between numbers and quantities by visualizing relationships. She used a physical model (in form of cookies) to help her students see multiple mathematical solutions. Her students were able to visualize the story context and make sense of the math. The story provided them with a language to discuss the math by relating to a context (the cookies) and the number symbols.

What this Means for the Field
Integrating literature and mathematics in school lessons provide students with rich learning opportunities. It is important that teachers choose a story for a math lesson with careful thought. The story should engage the students with interesting language and pique their curiosity. Stories that establish recognizable, fascinating, and real-world scenarios provide a platform for students to examine mathematics within context and communicate their thinking in multiple ways that make sense to them.

Citation

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