THE BIGGEST CHRISTMAS TREE

Building Anticipation – Setting the Context

Ask the children how many of them put up a Christmas tree in their home. Talk about where they get their Christmas tree.

Introduction

Tell the children that this is a story about a family that goes to the woods to cut down their own Christmas tree. Ask if anyone has ever done that and let those children tell about it. Then pose the question: *I wonder what problem this family is going to have with their Christmas tree.* Brainstorm and write the students' ideas down on an experience chart to refer to after reading.

Take a picture walk. Look at the first page and write the word *Christmas* on a card. Tell the students what it says and see if anyone can match it with the word on the page. Look at the picture of the family going to cut down their tree. Ask what the children are wearing in the picture to highlight the words, *snow pants, coats, mittens, hats* and *boots*. Make sure that the names *Emily* and *Jill* are presented. Look at the girls laughing and introduce the word *laughed*.

Turn to the page where Jill says: Here's a good tree. Ask: *Who can read what Jill says here? Do you think they will pick this tree? Why or why not?* Turn to the page where Emily answers: *No, Jill, we have to get a bigger tree.* Ask the children: *Can you read what Emily says here? What do you think they will do next?*

Then ask the children to read the rest of the story to themselves to find out what happens with the Christmas tree. Ask them to think about whether any of their predictions were right.

Discussion – Book Talk

Retell the story, collaboratively or in pairs. Review the elements of a story: character, problem, resolution. Revisit the list of potential problems that were brainstormed in pre-reading. Ask: *Did the Dunn family have any of these problems? What was the main problem? How did they solve it? Can you think of any other ways to solve the problem?* Brainstorm ideas, record them on chart paper and discuss which solutions were most feasible.

Creative Response – Independent Practice

Children can:

- read aloud Eve Bunting's *Night Tree* for a different perspective. In *Night Tree* the family goes to the woods to select a tree and decorates it with food for wild animals.
- create balls of suet and nuts to hang on a tree for the winter birds. See the procedure outline on the reproducible master for instructions.

Read Aloud Connections

Franklin's Christmas Gift by P. Bourgeois, Kids Can Press, 1998.
Night Tree by Eve Bunting, Harcourt, 1991.
The Beautiful Christmas Tree by Charlotte Zolotow, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1999.
The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree by G. Houston, Dial, 1988.

Learning about Language — Focused Teaching

High Frequency Words	bigger, biggest, first, laughed, walked, long, as, what, when, our, didn't	Say, spell, chant and cheer the words to reinforce them. Match word cards to the words in the book and add them to the word wall.
Word Families and Letter Clusters	Words ending in *er*.	Look in books and on the word wall for words ending in *er*.
Structural Features of Words.	Comparatives - *big, bigger, biggest*	Talk about adding *er, est* to words. Practice with *tall, small, loud,* and *soft.* Using the shared writing technique create sentences with words ending in *er* and *est*.
	Contraction - *here's*	Note *here's* in the story. Teach the contraction and look for other contractions on the word wall.
Text Features	Dialogue	Point out dialogue in the story with quotation marks and the word *said.* Write a language experience chart using those text features.

How to Make a Bird Feeder

A Bird Feeder

Decorate a tree with food for winter birds.

1. Get a big pine cone.

2. Cover the pine cone with peanut butter and bacon grease.

3. Roll the pine cone in bird seed.

4. Tie a string to the pine cone.

5. Tie the string to the tree.

Watch the birds come to feed.