

HOME Story Time Discussion | February 2021

Lynden Sculpture Garden

HOME program: www.home-at-lynden.org

Recordings and downloads: www.lydensculpturegarden.org/calendar/home-story-time

Book, English & Vietnamese: *Going Home, Coming Home* by Truong Tran and Illustrated by Ann Phong

HOME Story Time Reader: Don Mai

Art activity by Lynden art educator: Claudia Orjuela

Activity 3: Creative Play in the Snow

The main character in the story is a girl named Ami Chi who learns that she has two homes —one in the United States where she and her parents live, and another in Vietnam where her grandmother and other relatives live.

Traveling to Vietnam, the place her family came from taught Ami Chi a lot about her heritage and culture. It wasn't easy to adapt at first. She found her family in Vietnam spoke a different language, ate different food, had different weather. It took Ami Chi some time to get used to the new place and new people, but once she adapted, she began to feel at home in Vietnam and she started to feel like she belonged there.

Today's art activity is an invitation to enjoy our surroundings wherever we are. The conditions and situations around us change constantly. For example, the seasons change, we move to a different house or school, or like Ami Chi we travel to a different country. How can we find a sense of belonging, of being at home wherever we are? What makes you feel at home? What kinds of activities do you do at home?

In Milwaukee is winter and it's very cold right now, we just had a big snowstorm during the weekend. What kinds of things you do in the snow? The best way to adapt to this situation is to go outdoors and play with the snow! Today we will set up a simple environment that fosters creative play using ice cubes of different colors.

Materials

- Water
- Ice cube containers or small food containers
- Spoons
- Food Coloring

Art Making Process

How can you set up a simple environment that fosters creative play in the snow? Playing with colored ice cubes outdoors provides opportunities for pretend play and sensory play. Colored ice cubes are an open-ended material that offers countless play possibilities; this material offers multiple rather than single outcomes. Children can use colored ice cubes to build, to decorate the white snow, to paint, to tell stories, or to transfer them into various containers.

Reminders

Remind the children that the ice cubes are not for eating. The 4 and 5 years old children had a constant impulse to taste the ice cubes. Also, having their gloves and mittens off made it easier for some children to manipulate the ice cubes. Finally, the ice cubes were scattered all over the playground very quickly, so I reminded them to regroup the ice cubes in their containers to keep them together.

Make the ice

For a lighter color, in a jug of water mix 10 drops of food coloring. Observe how the color expands in the water. Pour the colored water in your containers and trays and finally in the freezer or outdoors. You can do this multiple times until you get the desired amount of ice.

Set up materials outdoors and explore

Outdoors, set up the ice cubes, some trays, containers, and big spoons. Once the materials are set up, allow children to explore and investigate freely. Invite them to play and come up with their own ways to use these materials.

First, provide specific prompts for the children such as getting the ice cubes out of the ice trays or choosing a color and collecting only the ice cubes of that color in their containers. As they play, they'll begin to generate their own ideas, such as throwing the ice cubes down the slide or making an ice train.

The children went to gather snow to make an Ice Cream Castle, they used the ice cubes to decorate the castle. After, they used the spoons to carve highways around the ice cream castle. They had the initiative to make their own ice cubes, so they packed snow in the ice trays. The children used the ice cubes to paint on the white snow. Since it was a sunny day, I brought paper towel squares so they would melt the ice cubes using the heat of their hand and transfer the color to the paper. They wrapped the paper towels around the ice cube and observed how the colors were transferred.

Conclusion

Children became one with their winter surroundings by going outside to play with ice cubes in the snow. Setting up play environments using simple materials can help children find themselves at home wherever they are. Appealing materials and environments allow and encourage children to experience the world for themselves through open-ended activities without so much guidance by parents or teachers. The idea behind this is to encourage children to think independently by engaging their attention and the exploration of the things they are interested in.