

READING WITH YOUR KIDS MAGAZINE




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WINTER IS ON ITS WAY! THREE WINTER KIDS CRAFTS TO INSPIRE IMAGINATION

BY: NAOMI GRUER

Sweater weather means spending more time inside, but there are still plenty of ways to inspire imagination. These three crafts provide hands-on exploration of winter themes while engaging the senses. Table-top crafts are more than two-dimensional activities; kids use fine motor skills to pick up and place pieces, spatial relationships to figure out where things go, and creativity when designing multi-media pictures.

Shaving Cream Snowmen are made by mixing shaving cream and glue to create “snow paint,” which dries puffy like snow. Kids listen to the shaving cream being sprayed, smell its scent, see its color, and, of course, touch the thick and goopy mixture. They can spread the snow paint with brushes, spoons, sponges, or their hands.

Craft Sticks Bear-in-Den combines puffy, soft cotton balls with flat, smooth craft sticks for a lesson in textures and shape recognition. Ask young children to find other triangles and rectangles to compare with the triangle den and rectangular sticks. This craft is a fun introduction to hibernation.

Transforming a Giant Box Into a Bear Cave takes craft to another level. Before play even begins, kids use whole-body movement while painting. The bigger the box, the more they'll stretch and reach.



Want to introduce shadows? Turn down the lights and use the inside of the box as a stage for small animal toys lit by a flashlight. Make a cozy cave in which to hibernate with blankets and pillows.

Hibernating animals eat a lot before winter since most won't eat until they wake up again. Hibernators survive by curling up in safe places, slowing heart rates and breathing, and lowering body temperatures. “Animals that are true hibernators include rodents like chipmunks, deer mice, woodchucks and ground squirrels. Bees, snakes and some bats are also hibernators,” says Chris Bachman of the National Forest Foundation. Bears, it turns out, don't actually hibernate. feed, and even give birth.

Winter Is on Its Way! Three Winter Kids Crafts to Inspire Imagination

BY: NAOMI GRUER



Craft Sticks Bear-in-Den

Supplies:

- construction paper
- marker
- scissors
- craft sticks
- cotton balls
- felt, stickers, or cut-out leaves
- white glue
- optional—hot glue gun and glue

Steps:

1. Draw a sleeping bear. Cut out.
2. Create a triangle out of craft sticks and glue to construction paper.
3. Glue bear in the middle of the den.
4. Glue cotton balls as snow. Add leaves.
5. Optional: secure cotton balls to paper with hot glue for extra adhesion.

Bear Cave

Supplies:

- giant box (think washing machine size)
- box cutter or scissors
- newspapers or drop cloth
- brown paint
- paintbrushes

Steps:

1. Cut flaps off one side of the box. This will be the entrance to the cave.
2. Place the box on newspapers or drop cloth.
3. Paint the outside of the box. Let dry.

Winter Is on Its Way! Three Winter Kids Crafts to Inspire Imagination

BY: NAOMI GRUER

Shaving Cream Snowmen

Supplies:

- construction paper, various colors such as black for eyes, orange for carrot nose, red for mouth
- marker
- scissors
- shaving cream
- white glue
- buttons
- optional--paint brush, spoon, or sponges

Steps:

1. Outline a snowman.
2. Cut out a hat, scarf, eyes, mouth, and carrot nose. Set aside.
3. Mix one part shaving cream to one part glue to create “snow paint.”
4. Use the snow paint to create the snowman's body.
5. Use the snow paint to create the snowman's face.
6. Using a paintbrush, spoon, sponges, or hands, spread shaving cream/glue mixture in snowman sections.
7. Dress the snowman and give him a face by pressing the hat, scarf, buttons, eyes, mouth, and nose into shaving cream.
8. Let dry.

Sources:

--National Forest Foundation,
<https://www.nationalforests.org/blog/do-bears-really-hibernate>

--National Geographic Kids,
<https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/science/general-science/10-fascinating-facts-about-hibernation/>

--Britannica Kids,
<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/hibernation/353245>

The Role of Animals in Therapeutic Interventions for Autism

BY: LISA JACOVSKY

PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY AND AWARD-WINNING CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHOR

The bond between humans and animals is ancient, transcending cultures, borders, and generations. Animals bring a sense of companionship, love, and therapeutic benefits to our lives. Particularly intriguing is the role animals, including cats, play in assisting individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Through literature and science, we uncover how these animals touch the lives of those with autism.

The Science Behind the Bond

Research consistently showcases the therapeutic value animals bring to individuals with ASD. A comprehensive literature review by **O'Haire, M. E.** in the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* highlights the positive effects of animal-assisted interventions on those within the spectrum. These effects range from enhancing social interactions to promoting overall emotional well-being by reducing stress and anxiety.

Introducing an animal into the life of someone with autism is a meaningful decision. A study by **Carlisle, G. K.** in the *Journal of Pediatric Nursing* delved into the decision-making processes of parents with autistic children regarding pet ownership. Findings showed overwhelmingly that the perceived emotional and social benefits played a significant role in their choices.



Feline Friends and Autism

While dogs and horses often take the limelight in therapeutic settings, cats, with their independent yet affectionate nature, have found a special place in the hearts of many with autism. Cats, in many ways, mimic the traits of those with Asperger's Syndrome — a profile on the autism spectrum. This observation is humorously and heartwarmingly depicted in ***All Cats Have Asperger Syndrome*** by Kathy Hoopmann. Through delightful pictures, the book underscores the quirks and qualities cats share with those on the spectrum, offering a playful lens through which to understand and appreciate ASD.



THE ROLE OF ANIMALS IN THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS FOR AUTISM

BY: LISA JACOVSKY

In more personal accounts like *Following Ezra by Tom Fields-Meyer*, the essence of pets in the lives of autistic individuals is beautifully articulated. This narrative offers readers a deep dive into the symbiotic relationship, shedding light on the immense comfort and understanding animals bring.

Reading to Educate and Inspire

Reading about the profound connections between animals and those with autism educates and deeply inspires me. Organizations like **Pet Partners and Love on a Leash** champion the cause, emphasizing how animals can be therapeutic. Personal blogs and narratives shared by organizations like **NJ Autism** further highlight real-life accounts of this enriching bond.

In Conclusion

As science and stories converge, the narrative remains consistent: animals, whether they bark, neigh, or purr, have an unparalleled ability to touch the lives of those with autism. With their calming presence, cats stand as silent support pillars for many. Delving into the literature on this topic broadens our understanding and inspires a deeper appreciation of how therapy manifests in our lives.



Exploring the
Timeless
Connection: Cats,
Companionship, and
Comfort in the
World of Autism





How Gerald Ford Ruined Christmas Vacation

By Rory Grady



READING WITH YOUR KIDS

Podcast

From age three to eight, I cared about only three things: cheese pizza, blue jeans, and US presidents. In preschool, I'd leave the house each day clad in a shirt and tie, complemented tastefully on the bottom by a pair of kids' Levi's. Around the same time, I'd convinced myself that I was the lost child of Ronald and Nancy Reagan. This development was particularly alarming to my parents, lifelong Democrats who took to calling me Alex P. Keaton.

Through most of elementary school, we'd split time at the holidays between the coasts, even years with my dad's family in Massachusetts and odd years with my mom's parents in San Francisco. 2006 was particularly harrowing for the Grady family. I'd given up on most of my delusions by then. I no longer went to school dressed like Ellen Degeneres, nor did I hold out hope that I was adopted. But my love of presidents remained. The year was unique in that we wouldn't be spending the whole trip in Massachusetts; after opening presents on the 25th, we'd be driving to New York to meet my godmother and her family.

I didn't want to go, but seeing as I was six and easily movable, I didn't have much say in the matter. My dad's mother was always my favorite gift-giver. Each even year, I'd run gleefully downstairs to find Nerf guns, toy rifles, and any other apparatus used—and ultimately taken away—for antagonizing my sister. That was far more appealing to me than anything New York could offer.

We drove through the day on Christmas and went to bed soon after getting to the hotel. We had an early morning the next day; we were going to the Empire State Building.

My mom has always been an avid watcher of The Today Show, a New York City institution. In my life, I've woken up to Al Roker's voice as much as any alarm. Coverage on Boxing Day 2006 was pretty singularly focused. Gerald Ford was dead.

I whimpered at the news, mourning one of my five living idols. In reality, I didn't know much about Gerald Ford—his policies, his legacy. I just knew he was a president, and that's all that counted. As bad as my reaction was to the morning's news, it was quickly dwarfed by what came next. Laid out on the bed for me was a pair of pleated khakis.

While no pants compared to blue jeans, nothing drew such antipathy from me as khakis did. I've asked my mom why she was so hellbent on having me wear slacks that day, knowing the reaction it would cause. Her best answer is that it was a different time then and that people dressed more formally to go out. What followed was an all-time meltdown. Vases shattered. Windows rattled across the tri-state area.

My Aunt Laura, hearing the commotion, knocked on our door.

"Linda, I heard screaming from the other room. Is everything okay?"

"It's to be expected," my mom responded. "Gerald Ford died."

My bitterness carried on throughout the day. We were bundled up, but the weather wasn't much different than San Francisco—partly cloudy, fifty-five degrees. My indignance grew as sweat quickly accumulated.

When we got to the Empire State Building, we moved quickly for the observation deck. My mom, always looking for the next Christmas card picture, wanted a photo op. The rest of my family coalesced around one of the telescopes, but I didn't budge. I was in no mood to be photographed.

"Rory, get over here," my mom said.

"Nuh-uh," I sneered.

First, she tried bribery. I was easily bribable. My parents knew that nine times out of ten, the promise of pizza or baseball cards would get me to fold on whatever issue we were squabbling about. But I remained unmoved.

"Okay, I guess we'll let Danielle pick lunch today because she's our good child," she said. She paused, waiting for movement, but there wasn't any. She shrugged, and my dad motioned for my godbrother Nick to join the picture instead. The resemblance between us was striking back then—similar size and features. Covered by layers of winter clothes, it was hard to tell the difference. So much so that, upon our return home, my grandmother commented on what a great picture of me it was.

While they took the picture, I waited to the side, fantasizing about Meg Ryan showing up to be my new mom.

As we left, my parents turned to my sister. All actions have consequences, I suppose.

"So, Danielle, what do you want to eat?" They asked, then looking back at me.

"SUSHI," she responded.

Looking back, it's a fitting ending for the day. We may have been in the pizza capital of the country, but punctuating something terrible with something beautiful gives me nothing to gripe about in my twenties. Defeat doesn't taste like just desserts; it tastes like fish.

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