

How to Wander Through “Once Upon a Letter”

A Note Before the Story Begins

Once upon a time – not so very long ago – children learned letters the way they learned the world: through movement, picture, sound, and story. Letters were not rushed. They were met gently, like old friends, and allowed to settle into the body before being asked to perform.

“Once Upon a Letter” was created for children who still learn this way.

Some children learn best by moving, imagining, and seeing the whole picture first. Their minds are naturally drawn to patterns, images, rhythm, and meaning. These children are often called “right-brain learners,” but what this really means is that their learning begins with experience before analysis. For them, traditional reading instruction can feel confusing or discouraging, not because they are incapable, but because the approach does not match how their minds naturally work.

For these children, letters are not just symbols to memorize – they are shapes to feel, sounds to hear, and stories to imagine. When learning enters through art, movement, and language-rich experiences, the brain forms deeper and more flexible connections. Understanding comes first; precision follows later.

This book invites those children into literacy through story rather than pressure, through creation rather than correction. Reading is not demanded; it is allowed to grow.

Why This Approach Is Research-Aligned

Research in child development and literacy consistently shows that young children learn best when instruction is meaningful, multisensory, and emotionally safe. Skills such as reading and writing develop most effectively when children are given time to build oral language, fine motor control, visual-spatial awareness, and confidence before being asked for accuracy.

Activities like form drawing strengthen the neural pathways needed for handwriting and reading by integrating movement, vision, and attention. Poetry and storytelling support phonological awareness and comprehension by embedding sounds within rich language. “Kid writing” allows children to express ideas freely while separating creativity from mechanical correctness – a practice shown to support motivation and long-term literacy growth.

Rather than rushing children toward early performance, this approach prioritizes readiness, engagement, and meaning. When these foundations are strong, fluent reading is more likely to emerge – and to last.



The Gentle Rhythm of a Letter Day

Each letter in this book is meant to be met like a small tale — unburied, curious, and complete in itself. One letter may take a single day, or it may unfold slowly over many. There is no right pace. There is only your child's pace. This rhythm supports right-brain learners by moving from whole → part, experience → symbol, and story → structure.

Here is the rhythm we recommend — though you are always welcome to wander.

Meeting the Letter

Begin by simply meeting the letter. Look at its shape. Trace it with your eyes. Read the poem aloud – slowly, perhaps more than once. For right-brain learners, language first lives in sound and image. Poetry wraps letters in rhythm and emotion, helping the child form an inner picture before any analysis is asked of them. This makes the letter feel familiar and friendly, rather than abstract. Invite your child to circle each place the letter appears in the poem and to gently say its sound.

There is no need to drill or correct. Recognition will grow through repetition and joy; this is especially important for right-brain learners, who benefit from seeing patterns within a whole rather than drilling isolated parts. When the child circles each instance of the letter and says its sound, they are gently connecting:

- visual recognition
- auditory sound
- meaning within context

Thinking & Feeling

Each poem is also followed by a simple thinking or feeling prompt. These questions are not tests – they are doorways. Right-brain learners often process meaning internally and emotionally. When a child is invited to wonder, imagine, or relate personally, the letter becomes connected to lived experience.

This is where language takes root – not just in the mind, but in the heart. There is no “right” answer. Listening is the work.

Form Drawing

Next comes form drawing – the quiet magic behind the scenes. In these flowing lines and mirrored shapes, the child is not yet writing letters, but preparing the inner pathways that make writing and reading possible. Form drawing strengthens visual-spatial awareness, balance, focus, left-to-right movement, and fine motor coordination. It gently trains the hand to follow the eye, and the mind to follow a path.

For right-brain learners especially, this movement-based work is essential; it builds a bridge between art and writing. It allows learning to pass through the body before it is asked to live on the page, learning patterns before the mind is asked to remember symbols. Letters become felt before they are fixed.

Move slowly. Beauty matters more than accuracy. The goal is gentle movement, not perfection.

Tracing the Letter

Tracing begins simply and grows gradually as the book progresses; it follows form drawing because the hand is now prepared. This slow expansion honors readiness. Rather than asking the child to produce perfect letters too soon, tracing allows the muscles of the hand to learn the gesture of the letter through repetition and ease.

For children who feel overwhelmed by too much output, this step builds confidence without strain. It will build throughout the book, but let them do whatever they feel ready for.

The Illustration Box

Here, your child is invited to draw whatever the poem stirred in them. This step is not extra – it is essential. When a child translates language into image, comprehension deepens. For right-brain learners, drawing is often the bridge between understanding and expression. The letter is no longer something they are learning about; it is something they are in conversation with.

Copywork → Kid Writing

Copywork begins traditionally: the child carefully copies a sentence. This builds attention, visual tracking, and early handwriting skills. Do as much as they are willing and able to do. But as the book continues, something important shifts. Gradually, the child is invited to dictate their own sentence to you (starting at letter “P”). You write it for them on a separate piece of paper or a chalkboard, and they copy it in this book. This honors their ideas while still supporting accurate spelling and structure. Finally – in the last letters – the child is invited into kid writing (starting at letter “V”).

In Waldorf-inspired learning, children are invited to write their way into reading, letting ideas lead and skills follow. Kid writing honors this tradition by giving the child permission to spell bravely, imperfectly, and joyfully – trusting that meaning matters more than mechanics in the beginning.

For right-brain learners, this separation is essential. When imagination is allowed to move freely, the mind stays open and confident; when spelling and correctness are gently added afterward, learning deepens without fear. In this way, kid writing protects creativity while quietly strengthening the foundations of real literacy.

First, ask your child what they would like to say about the poem. Listen closely, and let their words stay exactly as they are.

Next, invite your child to write the sentence on their own on a separate sheet of paper or a chalkboard. Encourage them to try their best with spelling, even if it feels uncertain. Resist the urge to correct or guide. At this moment, the child is practicing courage, not accuracy. They are experimenting with all of the sounds they have learned and discovering how they can build words. Encouraging children to write the sounds they hear (also known as invented spelling) helps build phonemic awareness and the “letter-to-sound decoding route” needed for reading and spelling.

When they are finished, you become the translator. Gently write the same sentence again beneath their writing, using conventional spelling and punctuation. Read it aloud together, honoring the meaning first.

Finally, invite your child to copy your version into this book. This allows correct spelling and structure to settle naturally, without interrupting the flow of imagination. The correct “adult writing” is shown as a comparison, not a correction, which keeps enthusiasm high. If the sentence is long, choose just one beautiful part to copy. If the child tires, stop. The goal is confidence, not completion. This moment is powerful...it is where many children first feel like real writers.

A Few Gentle Reminders

- You do not need to complete every part of a letter in one day.
- Repeating a favorite letter is always welcome.
- Blank pages are not a problem – they are resting places.
- Oral storytelling, drawing, and conversation count as learning.

Extra Wonders

Following this section, you will find a set of 30 enrichment game ideas to use anytime your child wants more play and you want more practice with literacy. Keep them relaxed and enjoyable, and use them over and over, especially your child's favorites.

At the end of the book after the final lesson, you will find letter cards to cut out for gentle review, storytelling, and word-building. These are meant to be sprinkled in when curiosity is high – not scheduled. Let them be played with and enjoyed whenever the desire arises.

A Final Whisper to Grown-Ups

This book trusts the child – and it trusts you.

Just remember that right-brain learners often flourish when:

- learning feels meaningful
- creativity is protected
- the body is involved
- mistakes are treated as part of growth

This book was designed to offer that environment.

You do not need to complete every activity. You do not need to hurry. Trust the process, and trust your child.



Above all...

*Trust that reading grows best when it is rooted in
meaning, movement, and joy.*

You are not behind.

You are right where the story begins.

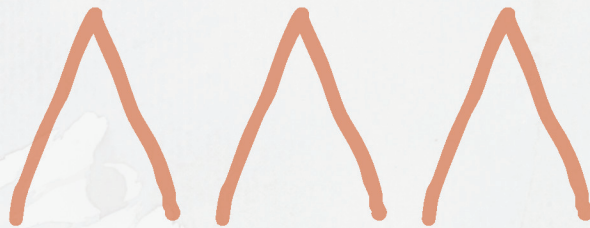
Now go explore and start your adventure!



*All around the
apple tree,
Ants go marching,
wild and free.
Air above is soft
and sweet,
Autumn whispers
at their feet.*

Circle each big "A" and little "a" in the poem above, and say the sound of the letter each time you do it!
How do you think it would feel to get to watch apples fall from a tree?

Copy the apples falling down below:



Now let's practice tracing:



Next, copy the sentence below:

The apple falls.

Finally, let's illustrate the sentence:

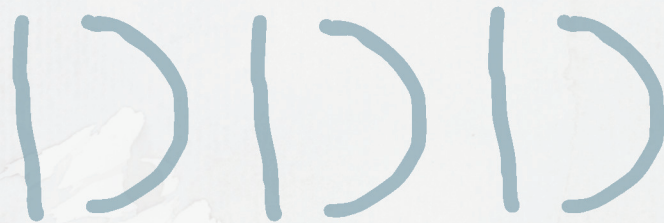




*B is the bear who bows by
the brook,
Big and bold, with a
careful look.
Branches bend as breezes
blow,
Beneath the boughs, the
berries grow.*

Circle each big "B" and little "b" in the poem above, and say the sound of the letter each time you do it!
How do you think the bear feels getting to sit peacefully by the quiet water?

Copy the big bear bellies down below:



Now let's practice tracing:

B B

Next, copy the sentence below:

The bear bows.

Finally, let's illustrate the sentence:





*Curled-up cat on a cushion
lies,
Clouds are drifting
through the skies.
Calm and clever, quiet and
kind,
Cats will climb what they
can find.*

Circle each big "C" and little "c" in the poem above, and say the sound of the letter each time you do it!
What helps you feel nice and cozy like the sleepy, calm cat?

Copy the curled cats looking out the window below:



Now let's practice tracing:



Next, copy the sentence below:

The cat curls.

Finally, let's illustrate the sentence:

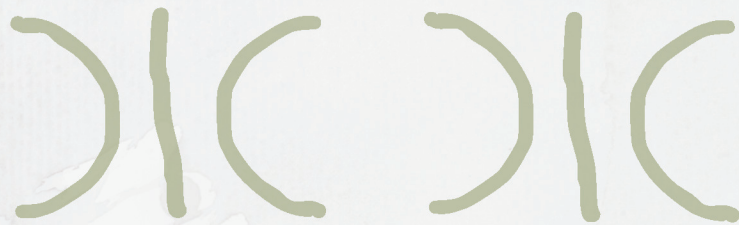




*Deer at dawn drift
through the dew,
Dancing softly, just
a few.
Down by dusk, they
disappear,
Dreaming gently, never
near.*

Circle each big "D" and little "d" in the poem above, and say the sound of the letter each time you do it!
Why do you think the deer might be running and trying to hide?

Copy the jumping deer in the field below:



Now let's practice tracing:

D D D

Next, copy the sentence below:

The deer dash.

Finally, let's illustrate the sentence:

