

The  
Early Years Count  
**Literacy**  
Connection



## The Outside

Written and illustrated by  
Gianna Marino

*Preschool edition*

### Overview of Book

A group of prairie dogs want to play outside but their buddy, Earl, doesn't feel safe out there. Can his friends help him to enjoy being outside? What will it take?

Genre: Picture/informational

### Vocabulary

Books are a rich source of words new to children. Here are some words from *The Outside* to introduce in your classroom:

burrow	dangerous
flood	protect

Each time you read the book, choose 2 or 3 words to highlight.

Use age-appropriate definitions and/or the illustrations to help children gain an understanding of each word's meaning.

Use these new words throughout the day, reminding the children, "That's a word from our story!"

### Connecting with the HighScope Curriculum

#### COR Advantage

Approaches to Learning  
Item A (*Initiative and planning*)

Social and Emotional  
Development  
Item F (*Building relationships with other children*)

Physical Development  
and Health Item I (*Gross motor*)

Science & Technology  
Item DD  
(*Natural and physical world*)

### Reading Tips

Talk to the children about being a friend and what friends do to help each other especially when one friend is scared or worried. Ask them for ideas and write them down to refer to. Let them know that the prairie dogs in the story are all friends but one (Earl) has a lot of worries. Stop during the read and ask, "What are they going to do to help Earl play outside?" Provide time for the children to see the other animals and talk about what Earl is really afraid of. Talk about how they all helped each other. Linger on and really look at their burrow and how it helps them all be safe.

Three readings are recommended to familiarize children with the story. Each reading provides an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary words, pose open-ended questions, and engage children in activities that make the story "come alive."

### Throughout the Routine

Refer to the book throughout the day and use new vocabulary words in meaningful ways. Active engagement with the story helps the content come alive.

Use playdough and counting bears at **Small Group Time** to create burrows and to encourage retelling the story.

At **Outside Time**, play tag and other chase games like the prairie dogs in the story.

At **Large Group Time**, act out the story. Have the children crawl to burrow, chase, be the animals in the story (coyote, hawk) and the storm.

### Around the Room

Highlight the book's content and build on the children's excitement in a variety of locations.

Add photos of real prairie dogs, coyotes and other animals of the plains in the **Book Area**.

Encourage children in the **Block Area** to use the prairie dogs burrow as a design model in their buildings with unit blocks and other items. Is there an emergency exit? A flood room? A lookout room?

Mix of pebbles and soil in the **Sand and Water Area**. Encourage the children to use animals and create burrows.

### Open-ended Questions

Enhance active engagement and early critical thinking skills by asking open-ended questions. These questions encourage children to explain why or how things happen, make predictions, or brainstorm possibilities rather than give one "right" answer.

Here are some questions you might ask for *The Outside*:

What was the scariest part of the story?

What do you think it would be like to live in a burrow like the prairie dogs?

Why do you think the prairie dogs help each other so much?

*For more information on how to use books and stories with children to enhance your curriculum, contact*  
**The Family Connection:**

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### @ Home

Since many of the children in our county will have this book at home, use it as a way to further the home-school connection. In your daily contact—in person or by text, email or other notes home—encourage families to share *The Outside* with their child. Here's a sample message you can send:

In this story, Earl has a lot of fear about going outside. As you read this with your child, talk about the fears Earl has: there is a coyote hiding, a hawk flying overhead and a huge storm. Ask, "Why do you think the other prairie dogs are not worried and scared like Earl?" Notice all the prairie dogs do for one another, how they help each other. Talk about how your child helps, and how the family helps one another, especially when a friend or family member is scared or worried. Together, look carefully at the labeled drawing of the burrow. Ask, "What would it be like to live here?" Talk about other rooms you might need, how to get in and out and who you'd invite over.