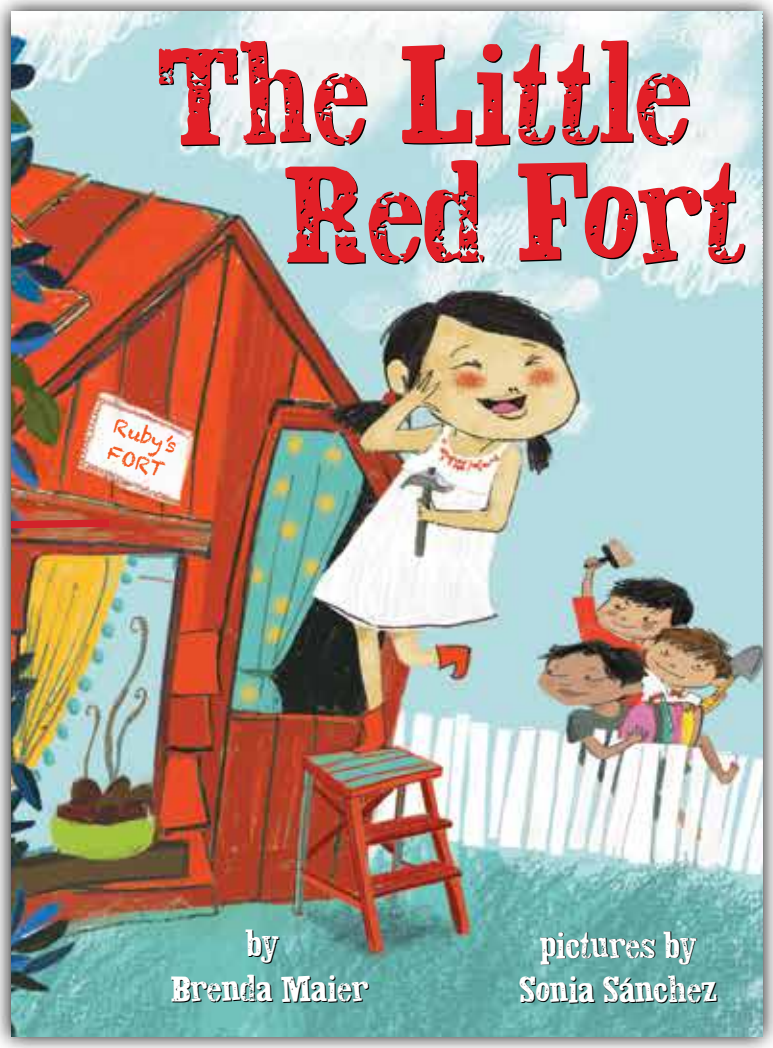
The Little Red Fort Teacher's Guide: Lessons & Activities



With sprightly text and winsome pictures, this modern spin on the timeless favorite **The Little Red Hen** celebrates the pluck and ingenuity of young creators everywhere!

★ "Young readers . . . will be inspired."
— **BCCB,** STARRED REVIEW

"Fun to read aloud." — **Booklist**

"Breaks gender and cultural stereotypes. . . . empowering "
— **Kirkus Reviews**

This guide contains a collection of lessons geared toward children from preschool through grade 5. I've given options for different subjects and ability levels. Choose the ones that fit your school and objectives (and your students), and modify them as you wish. Happy learning!

—**Brenda Maier**

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PRESCHOOL
Pre-Reading and Math Activities

SHAPE FORT (math and art center)

★ Provide students with blank paper, glue, and cut-out shapes in a variety of colors and textures. (e.g., green felt triangles, red foil rectangles, etc.)

★ Using the shapes, invite them to create their own forts.

★ Encourage students to write a sentence or dictate a caption about their fort.

SHAPE FORT (math engineering center)

★ Provide groups of students with rulers, a yardstick, and building materials such as blocks or cardboard "bricks."

★ Challenge them to build a fort 3 feet high and 1 foot wide. They should check their fort's height with both a ruler and a yardstick.

★ Facilitate the students' discovery that three feet is actually the same as one yard by asking questions like "Maybe one member of your group should measure with a yardstick while the others measure with rulers on the other side (simultaneously). What do you notice?"

COLOR CONNECTIONS

★ Discuss the fact that Ruby's fort is red. Brainstorm some other red things that could fit in her fort.

★ Go through whatever colors you're practicing and ask for items of those colors that might fit in the fort.

★ Draw a pentagon or square (or trace one using cardstock patterns) with red crayon on a piece of paper to be the "fort." Have students draw three red things in Ruby's fort and label them.

★ This lesson could be modified for counting. "How many flowers (small die-cut) will fit in the fort?" Have each student count the number of flowers in the fort and write the number beneath the picture.

LETTER GAME: F IS FOR FORT

★ Explain that Fort begins with the letter F and practice the sound that F symbolizes.

★ With masking tape, tape off a square on the floor to be Ruby's "fort."

★ Display a collection of stuffed animals, toys, or other objects, several of which begin with the letter F. Ask for volunteers to choose an object that begins with the letter F and place the chosen object in the fort.

GRADES K-5

ELA: SELECTED CRITICAL THINKING POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

★ What kind of person is Ruby? What in the story makes you think so? (giving text evidence to support your thinking; making inferences using adjectives/describing words)

★ How are Ruby's brothers different from her? In what ways are they like her? (comparing & contrasting; supporting opinions with text evidence)

★ How would the story be different if the boys had agreed to help their sister in the first place? (predicting; cause & effect)

★ In fiction stories, a character usually changes in some way. Pick one of the children in the story and explain how that character changes. (analyzing; inferring; giving support)

★ What do you think might happen the next time Ruby needs help? Why do you think so? (predicting, supporting)

★ Do you agree or disagree with Ruby's decision not to let the boys play/to eventually let the boys play? Why do you think so? (evaluating, supporting)

★ What do you think is the message of this story? What themes do you detect in the story? (reflecting, summarizing, analyzing, evaluating)

[themes might include: hard work/work ethic, perseverance, independence/self-reliance, siblings, right & wrong, consequences, following dreams, helping, etc.]

ELA: RESPONDING TO THE STORY/ WRITING

This story is a retelling of a traditional tale, a folktale. The following writing options assume the students have experienced both *The Little Red Fort* and *The Little Red Hen*.

Primary Character Analysis

★ Fold a piece of paper in half. On one side, draw a picture of *The Little Red Hen* and on the other side, draw a picture of Ruby.

★ Describe (with words or sentences) each character based on her words and actions.

★ Make sure the students focus on the character internally as well as externally. For example, you could say that one character is a chicken and one character is a girl, but you could also say that Ruby is planning to play in her fort, while Hen is planning to eat her supper.

Upper Elementary Persuasive Paragraph (or Essay)

OPTION I

HOW COULD RUBY CONVINCE HER BROTHERS TO HELP HER BUILD THE FORT?

(reflecting, persuading, collaborating, discussing, supporting, thinking, evaluating; paragraph and essay structure elements such as main idea, complete sentences, introduction & conclusion, multiple perspectives, target audience, etc.)

★ Reflect how you might persuade someone to help you do something. Consider Ruby's viewpoint as a youngest sibling and the boys' perspectives as older siblings. With these considerations in mind, how could Ruby persuade the boys to help her build the fort?

★ Encourage the students to collaborate, discussing and brainstorming together in order to compile a list of strategies Ruby could use. Remind them to tailor their arguments to the older brothers.

★ Write a paragraph from Ruby's perspective. To do so, select the three best arguments and use them to write a paragraph or essay that persuades the boys to help build the fort.

OPTION II

COMPARE AND CONTRAST *THE LITTLE RED FORT* WITH *THE LITTLE RED HEN*

★ Based on your students' needs, review any terms, such as setting, plot, characters, solution, introduction, conclusion, or main idea, required to complete the paragraph or essay.

★ Each small group of students will analyze how the story elements (setting, plot, characters, solution, etc.) of the two stories are alike and different by creating a Venn Diagram.

★ You can add some problem-solving by allowing them to decide how to make a Venn Diagram without a pre-made chart. They might ask for a compass, rulers, or trace an upturned trash bin. The point is that they have to find a solution.

★ Encourage the students to use complete sentences as this trick will make paragraph construction much simpler.

★ Using the Venn diagram as a prewriting organizer, have each student write a paragraph or essay about the similarities and differences in the two stories' elements. The diagram will help them form the body of the paragraph or essay, but they will need to compose an introduction and conclusion to fit the body.

Interdisciplinary Fort Design Challenges

(These may include Science, Math, Engineering, Technology, Social Studies, and Visual Literacy)

OPTION I

TEMPLATE DESIGN: CREATE A 3D FORT FROM 2D SHAPES.

★ As background knowledge, ensure your students understand the differences between 2D and 3D shapes. Explore this relationship by asking them to compare and contrast a square and cube, triangle and triangular pyramid, etc. (You can use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast these two types of shapes, if desired.)

★ Explain that 2D shapes can be combined to construct 3D shapes. Hold up a template or "nets." (These are easily found by searching "free 3D shape templates.")

★ Give each student a template and ask them to visualize what it will make when assembled. Students should assemble (cut out whole design, fold, and tape if needed) the templates and compare the shape to their predictions. "What did you get right? What parts of your shape required you to change your thinking?"

★ Emphasize that it's okay to have predicted incorrectly. Hypotheses aren't always correct, but scientists do change or modify their thinking as new information comes in.

★ Provide materials like rulers, compasses, and protractors. Challenge the students, as a group or individually, to design a paper template of 2D shapes that will make a little 3D fort when assembled. Coach as needed, asking facilitative questions. "How will you arrange them on the page so they can be folded together into a fort? Where should you draw a door or window so that it ends up in the right place when assembled?"

★ Share finished paper forts. If the templates don't work when assembled, encourage students to modify their designs and try again. As Thomas Edison said when he was searching for the perfect light bulb filament: "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

OPTION II

LITTLE RED FORT DESIGN CHALLENGE (for a Classroom Parade of Forts or a fort-building contest)

★ Tell students that like Ruby, they are going to make a fort. Put them in collaborative groups to design a fort that must meet certain specifications and adhere to certain constraints.

★ Include specifications such as: It must be painted red, be 10'' square, etc. Modify these specifications to fit your students' needs. You could include angle or height requirements in SI/metric measurements, for example.

★ Constraints might be the construction deadline and the virtual budget you will allow the students. For the budget, post a pricelist for materials (popsicle sticks, styrofoam, etc.) they can purchase from the store. The fort must come in under budget.

★ After a design is agreed upon, the student teams will build their forts, keeping track of how much they've spent, monitoring their goals so they are finished on time, etc. As they build, the students should feel free to make modifications to improve their designs.

★ For a technology component, have the students create a stop-motion movie of their construction process to share with their peers.

★ If you choose to do a fort-building contest, you might consider doing it at school, under your supervision. You might also consider creating a rubric or checklist so that the judging criteria is clear, and be sure to give this to the teams before designing begins. You could even let the students help decide what the judging criteria will be.

★ Display a Parade of Forts for other students to see. (Feel free to send photos of your forts to the author at bmaierauthor@gmail.com or tag her when you post on social media @MaierBrenda.)

OPTION III

GREEN FORT CHALLENGE

★ Have students research how home construction affects the environment. Compile a list of negative consequences.

★ In student groups, discuss how you could design and build an environmentally friendly fort. For example, you might use recycled material to conserve resources or construct skylights to reduce electricity usage.

★ This is a very open-ended challenge, so allow students the freedom to research the elements of environmental protection in which they are most interested.

★ Omit the budget constraint, as students will be using a variety of recycled materials. Instead, change the goal to something like, "Make at least three environmentally responsible choices in your fort design." For a contest, it could be to make as many changes as you can.

★ Construct a Green Fort and add notes to the base justifying your design as an improvement over a traditional design.

GREEN FORT CHALLENGE AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THE RED FORT CHALLENGE

★ When choosing to make Green Forts after constructing Red Forts, students should research how housing construction negatively affects the environment. After that, the groups should recovene and modify their Red Fort designs so that they're more environmentally responsible.

OPTION IV

GREEN HABITAT/BIOME FORT CHALLENGE (social studies, science, art, research technology, engineering, math)

★ Imagine you own a fort design company, and you have customers who live in different biomes. Each customer wants a fort designed specifically for his/her living environment. Discuss what you know and what you need to know in groups.

★ Choose three biomes from the list your teacher has offered (rainforest, desert, avannah, alpine mountains, etc.). These are your customers' biomes. You will need to research each one to find out what you need to know to complete their orders. What is the climate like? What are the dangers of living in this biome? What resources are/are not available?

★ On paper, your group will design a fort that:

- makes use of resources that are available in each given biome.
- is adapted to the needs of the given biome.

★ Construct a model of the forts to share in a class museum. Give math mini-lessons as needed that might include measurement, angles, etc.

★ If constructing a fort isn't feasible, have students draw an advertising poster for their company. The ads should show three different fort options, including diagrams or illustrations detailing the modifications each fort has that makes it uniquely suitable to its environment.

★ For a technology component, each group can plan, write, and film a commercial for their fort design company. They can use persuasive techniques to convince their target audience to order a custom fort.

★ If you're doing a unit on Fantasy or Science Fiction, adapt this challenge to fit. What would students need to consider when making a fort for a mermaid? What if the fort were on another planet?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The Little Red Hen
by Paul Galdone
(Clarion Books, 1973)

The Little Red Hen
by Byron Barton
(HarperCollins, 1993)

The Little Red Hen (Makes a Pizza)
by Philemon Sturges and Amy Walrod
(Dutton Children's Books, 1999)

Mañana, Iguana
by Ann Whitford Paul and Ethan Long
(Holiday House, 2004)

Little Red Henry
by Linda Urban and Madeline Valentine
(Candlewick Press, 2015)