

# The Gingerbread Boy

*Story in a Can*

**Circle Time**

The Listening Room  
www.bionicear.com

by Chris Barton, MM, MT-BC

I am excited to introduce you to the Story-in-a-Can method of storytelling. All you need is a cookie tin, some adorable little storybook characters (which Dave has drawn for us) and a great tale. The stories that work best are sequential, repetitive and lend themselves to adding a sung or chanted refrain. For instance, this month I used The Gingerbread Boy which has the repetitive line: I am the Gingerbread Boy I am and I can run, I can, I can! It is repeated over and over in the story and allows the audience a chance to participate in the telling.



Another requirement for a Story-in-a-Can is that the story must have only a few characters and those characters enter the story one at a time. Whenever a character is introduced, the others make a re-appearance as well. (Think Old MacDonald and The Lady who swallowed a Fly) It's a wonderful way to develop memory skills.

Print the activity onto cardstock paper. The characters are two sided. Fold them over and glue the two sides together. You can even place the end of a popsicle stick inside to make your characters into puppets.

Before I begin the story, I like to build interest in the can. I ask the children what they think might be inside. And then I tell them that the only way to get the story out of the can is to utter some magic words. So, I get out my magic wand and we pass the can and the wand around the room as each child says something magical. (My favorite after abracadabra, bibbity-bobbity-boo, and please and thank you was... charge it!) Keeping the characters in the can and bringing them out one at a time works like a charm. It is novel and keeps the attention of the audience. They can't wait to see who will be the next character out of the can. The first time you sing the refrain, practice it with the children. I like to pat my knees or do some kind of body rhythm when I sing it. When the children are familiar with the story, have them manipulate the characters and say their parts.

Once you try this Story-in-a-can, you will be amazed at how easy it is come up with your own ideas for other stories that will work well in this style.

Here are some variations:

Use real ingredients instead of the illustrated versions. I put everything in plastic bags and pass them around the circle for a tactile experience.

Use a piece of cloth to serve as the stage. It discourages little hands from playing with the characters as the story is being told.

Serve gingerbread cookies after the story. Better yet, make them!



# The Gingerbread Boy

as told by Chris Barton

Once upon a time there was a little old lady and a little old man. One day they said to each other, "Let's bake cookies!" So the little old lady asked the little old man what kind of cookies he wanted to make. "Chocolate chip?" he asked. "No, we don't have any chocolate chips," said the little old lady. "How about peanut butter?" she asked. "We don't have any peanut butter," said the little old man. "I know," she said. "We can make a gingerbread cookie!"

So they went to the cupboard and took out a bowl and a spoon and some flour and sugar and eggs and cinnamon. And then they stirred it and stirred it and stirred it some more. Next, they took the rolling pin and they rolled it and rolled it and rolled it some more. Then, they cut it in the shape of a gingerbread boy and popped it in the oven. They waited and waited and waited some more. Finally, the little old lady said, "It smells good. I will check to see if it is done." And she opened the oven door and peeked inside. "Nope, it's not done yet." So, they waited and waited and waited some more. Then, the little old man opened the oven door to peek inside. Well...

Out jumped the gingerbread boy and zoom he took off running out the door. "STOP!" said the little old lady and the little old man. "We want to eat you!" But the gingerbread boy laughed and said, "I am the gingerbread boy I am and I can run, I can, I can! I can run faster than you, little old lady and I can run faster than you, little old man" And zoom, he took off running down the road.

Soon, he saw a black and white cow grazing in the pasture. "STOP!" said the cow. "I want to eat you!" But the gingerbread boy laughed and said, "I am the gingerbread boy I am and I can run, I can, I can! I can run faster than the little old lady and I can run faster than the little old man and I can run faster than you, too!" And zoom, he took off running down the road.

Soon, he saw a brown horse grazing in the pasture. "STOP!" said the horse. "I want to eat you!" But the gingerbread boy laughed and said, "I am the gingerbread boy I am and I can run, I can, I can! I can run faster than the little old lady and I can run faster than the little old man and I can run faster than the black and white cow and I can run faster than you, too!" And zoom, he took off running down the road.

Soon, he saw a yellow cat lying in the sun. "STOP!" said the cat. "I want to eat you!" But the gingerbread boy laughed and said, "I am the gingerbread boy I am and I can run, I can, I can! I can run faster than the little old lady and I can run faster than the little old man and I can run faster than the black and white cow and the brown horse and I can run faster than you, too!" And zoom, he took off running down the road.

Well, the gingerbread boy was getting tired from all his running and soon, he saw a red fox sitting on the bank of the river. "Hey, gingerbread boy, what's your hurry?" said the fox. "I am running away from the little old lady and little old man and the black and white cow and the brown horse and the yellow cat because they all want to eat me!" said the gingerbread boy. "And now, here is the river that I must cross, so I can keep running away from everyone who wants to eat me." "Well..." said the fox. "I have just finished my dinner and I am not hungry at all, so I could give you a ride on my back and swim across the river to my house on the other side. Would you like a ride?" The gingerbread boy thought, "Well, if he just finished his dinner, he won't be hungry enough to eat me." So he climbed up onto the fox's tail and the fox jumped into the sparkling water.

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Pretty soon the water got deeper and the fox said, "Gingerbread boy you had better climb onto my back so you don't get wet (you know what happens to cookies when they get wet)" "OK," said the gingerbread boy. Then the water became even deeper. "Gingerbread boy, you had better climb onto my head so you don't get wet." "OK," said the gingerbread boy. "Oh my, gingerbread boy, the water is really, really deep now, you had better climb onto my nose so you don't fall off." "OK," said the gingerbread boy. And just then the red fox opened his mouth and "GULP!" he swallowed the gingerbread boy all up!

Well, back at the little old lady and little old man's house, they agreed never to make a gingerbread boy again. What kind of cookies do you think they should make next?

# The End

