

## Make a Cartoon

In first grade, kids will read stories galore about all sort of animals, real and imaginary. They'll work hard to “decode” the words—learn how their letter sounds fit together—but teachers will also want them to “comprehend” what they're reading as a whole. What is the story about? Who are the main characters? What happens first, middle, and last?

Here's a way that you can encourage your first grade reader to develop this kind of comprehension, using common, recycled items while you're at it!

### What You Need:

- Two discarded styrofoam trays, such as the ones used under some fresh vegetables.
- Scissors
- Nontoxic permanent markers
- Tissue paper in dark and light blues
- White glue, paintbrush
- White card stock
- Toothpicks

### What to Do:

1. Start by pouring some white school glue into a small bowl, and diluting it slightly with water so that it can be painted easily onto paper with a paintbrush. Then rip squares of dark and light blue tissue paper.
2. Invite your child to lay the tissue paper in overlapping arrangement over the tray, to look like ocean water. Then paint them down, using the diluted glue.
3. While the tray background is drying, take the other tray and cut out the shapes of two fish of any size or shape—especially if they look like fish in a story your child has just read!
4. Have your child use the markers to paint the two fish in different designs, and encourage him to have fun, whether it's with polka dots, stripes, or scales. Stick them on the end of a toothpick, and stick the other end of the toothpick into the first styrofoam tray. Have your child move the fish into any position he likes, whether swimming side by side or facing one another—and relate them to any story he's recently read, too!
5. Now for the really fun part: help your child cut two dialogue “balloons” out of white card stock. Have him write a line of dialogue for each fish and stick it on another toothpick near the fish's mouth ... then be prepared for a big round of laughter.
6. For some kids, one round of dialogue will be plenty—if that's the case with your child, just enjoy the ride. But for lots of kids, there's even more fun in store. Make a bunch of cartoon balloons, move the fish around, and you can even make a full fledged story. If your child is really enthusiastic, take out a digital camera and photograph each “frame.” Who knows? You may end up with a book that may become a family classic; you'll certainly end up with a kid whose reading skills are growing by leaps and bounds (or should we say, swims and glides?)

You don't need to limit yourself to ocean scenes in this project. Green tissues make a great forest background, and geometrical shapes can make a barn and fence—there are lots of great choices to enjoy!



